The Iterative Turn

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the implications of the increasingly prominent propensity to copy as a creative practice in contemporary culture. While debates about plagiarism, copyright infringement, and the state of copyright inform this project, the focus here is on broader issues. The argument is formulated as an attempt at defining a cultural condition that triggers novel attitudes to creativity in order to explore the possibilities of a reconceptualisation of copying as a creative category. The aesthetic tendencies identified in this project are presented as heavily influenced by the emergence of new technologies. But the thesis is not an analysis of the twenty-first century new media culture. Instead, the contemporary technological moment is discussed as a condition of postproduction, in an attempt to devise a historical and critical framework that goes beyond questions of the intersection of creativity and technology. By doing so, this project strives to interrogate the restrictions and inadequacies of the dominant categories of originality, creativity, and authorship, in legal and creative terms, to propose the notion of iteration as a possible alternative. Practices of copying are represented as a necessary condition of contemporary culture and a manifestation of a shift in aesthetics, here defined as the Iterative turn.

Chapter 1 formulates a critical framework for discussing iteration and positions the contemporary Iterative turn in relation to developments in the visual arts, literature, publishing, and law. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 offer a discussion of representative approaches to contemporary iterative writing and possible ways of conceptualising the means by which they engage with notions of originality, creativity, and authorship. While the focus here is first and foremost on literary texts, extensive references are made to the arts broadly conceived: the media and media theory, philosophy, literary and art theory, as well as case law and critical legal studies, to arrive at a more comprehensive formulation of the aesthetics of iteration for the emergent cultural condition. In its attempt to think about the contemporary, the thesis posits a framework for looking beyond the established paradigms of writing.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACIP	Jacques Derrida, 'A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event'
AK	Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*
AR	Helene Hegemann, *Axolotl Roadkill* (German original)
ARKD	Helene Hegemann, *Axolotl Roadkill*, trans. Kathy Darbyshire
ARSS	Jacques Derrida, 'Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides'
ATP	Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.
BB	Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Being Boring'
CR	The 9/11 Commission Report
CTF	Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland, 'cut to fit the toolspun course'
D	Kenneth Goldsmith, *Day*
DOA	Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'
H	Gregory Ulmer, *Heuretics*
HTVN	Tom Philips, *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*
N	M. NourbeSe Philip, 'Notanda'
OG	Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*
OMR	Travis Macdonald, *The O Mission Repo*
PA	Jill Bennett, *Practical Aesthetics*
PCAS	Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*
QCT	Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology'
RA	Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*
RO	Ronald Johnson, *Radi os*
SAD	Kenneth Goldsmith, *Seven American Deaths and Disasters*
SEC	Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context'
SC	Johanna Drucker, 'Speculative Computing'
SL	Johanna Drucker, *SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing*
T	Martin Heidegger, 'The Turning'
TAG	Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*
TPOG	Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Translator's Preface to *Of Grammatology*
TU	Mark Currie, *The Unexpected*
TWOA	Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'
UG	Marjorie Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*
UW	Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*
W	Kenneth Goldsmith, *The Weather*
WTBLA	Liz Kotz, *Words to be Looked at*
WWA	Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?'
Z!	M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*

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'PLAGIARISING WELL IS HARD TO DO': AN INTRODUCTION

In December 2013 Shia LaBeouf, a child-star turned performance artist, posted online his short film *HowardCantour.com*, which had debuted at the Cannes 2012 festival to high critical acclaim. Its availability online caused a considerable controversy after significant similarities were exposed between LaBeouf's film and Daniel Clowes's comic *Justin M. Damiano* (2007). The script, many of the visuals, as well as dialogues of LaBeouf's film all proved to be appropriations of Clowes's, incorporated into *HowardCantour.com* without acknowledgement. On January 8, 2014 LaBeouf tweeted a storyboard for his next short, *Daniel Boring*. 'It's like Fassbinder meets half-baked Nabokov on Gilligan Island,' LaBeouf declared [Figure 1].[1] The storyboard was, again, a copy of a comic series and a graphic novel *David Boring* (2000), also by Daniel Clowes,[2] and the statement a quotation of Clowes's description of *David*.[3] LaBeouf circulated his *Daniel* accompanied by a 'cease and desist' letter from Clowes's attorney, addressing the issue of both copied works and calling LaBeouf to undertake 'all appropriate and necessary steps to redress his wrongs.'[4]

While LaBeouf complied with the cease and desist note – the relevant tweets were deleted, *HowardCantour.com* taken down – his subsequent amends turned into a statement on the ambiguous status of the relationship between copy and original in contemporary culture. His public, social-media driven apology for an act dismissed by the media as transgressive and infringing took the form of a complete appropriation stunt. None of the tweeted statements were LaBeouf's own; instead his apology for plagiarism was also plagiarised and included an eclectic mix of unacknowledged quotations from, among others, a hip hop megastar, Kanye West,

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[1] Shia LeBeouf, Twitter post, 8 January 2014, @thecampaignbook. The post has now been deleted.

[2] Interestingly, appropriation is a persistent and characteristic feature of Clowes's work as well. As Daniel Nicolás Ferreiro points out, 'Clowes's works have continually revealed echoes from films, paintings or literature, blended with different forms of popular culture' [Daniel Nicolás Ferreiro, 'Relational Genres, Gapped Narratives, and Metafictional Devices in Daniel Clowes's *David Boring*', in *Relational Design in Literature and the Arts: Page and Stage, Canvas and Screen*, ed. Rui Carvalho Homem (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 185]. *David Boring* is the prime example, built around references to superhero comic books, and *Star Trek* in particular, here reworked as The Yellow Streak. Clowes's response to LaBeouf's appropriations does not, however, acknowledge Clowes's interest in aesthetics of appropriation as a creative practice.

[3] see: Daniel Clowes, 'The Velvet Gloves are off: A Boring Interview with *Ghost World's* Daniel Clowes', interview by Matt Silvie, *The Comics Journal*, 233 (2001), 66.

[4] Michael J. Kump to Brian G. Wolf, 7 January 2014, circulated as a Twitter post, 8 January 2014, https://twitter.com/thecampaignbook/status/420931894935834624/photo/1, and https://twitter.com/thecampaignbook/status/420931951462477824/photo/1.

the notorious Toronto Mayor, Rob Ford, and Yahoo! website comments section.[5] LaBeouf's explanation of the nature of his art in an interview for *Bleeding Cool* was also a compilation of repurposed material: statements by Duchamp, Kenneth Goldsmith, Lawrence Lessig, Gregory Betts, and Steve Jobs, among others.

This approach resonates with echoes of Ted Berrigan's interview with John Cage (1967),[6] a text entirely composed by Berrigan from a compilation of statements by Warhol and Burroughs, among others, but attributing everything to Cage. As such, Berrigan's take on appropriation is manifested not only in the act of recycling textual material itself but, perhaps even more importantly, in the selection of sources, all pointing to a carefully constructed statement on the creative possibility of the copy. Berrigan's act, I argue, should not be seen as a manifestation of plagiarism. It resides in an aesthetic engagement with the dynamic of repetition so characteristic of Warhol's silk screens and Burroughs's cut outs, evoked in Berrigan's text, and the broader attitude it exemplifies. There is a sense of an appropriation of not just the source but of a particular attitude to creativity that is repeated when the words of Andy Warhol are being flagrantly repurposed.

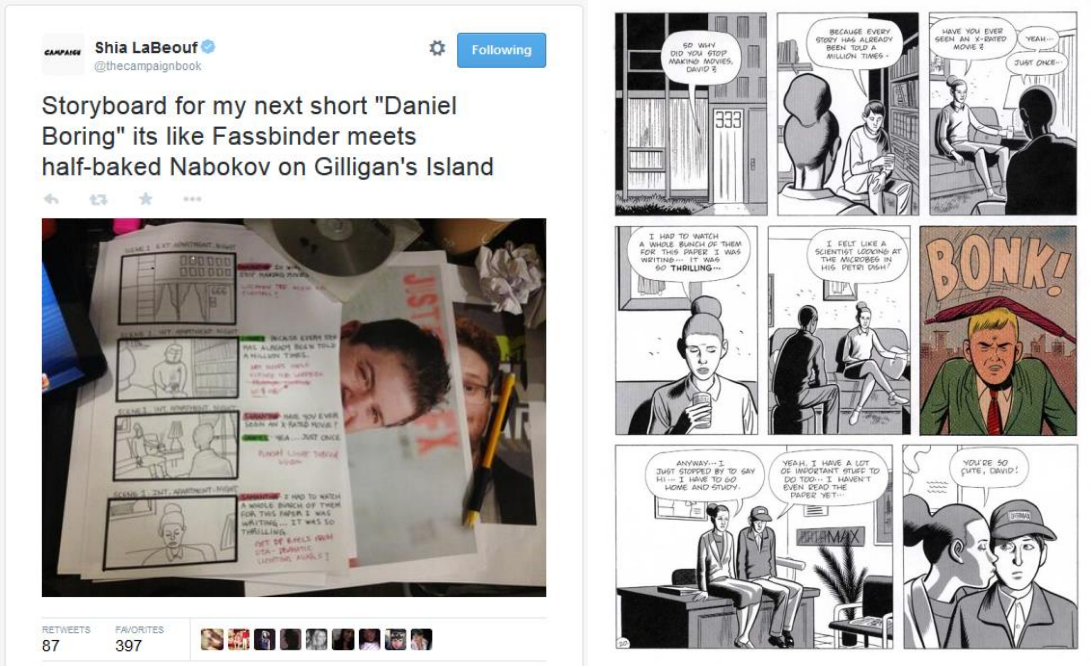

FIGURE 1: SHIA LABEOUF'S STORYBOARD FOR *DANIEL BORING* AND DANIEL CLOWES'S *DAVID BORING* (PAGE 20)

[5] LaBeouf's approach to writing his apologies was first identified by a Twitter user. See: Molly Horan, 'Shia LaBeouf's Plagiarism Controversy', *Know Your Meme*, accessed 10 October 2014, http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/events/shia-labeoufs-plagiarism-controversy.

[6] Ted Berrigan, 'An Interview with John Cage', *Electronic Poetry Center*, accessed 10 September 2014, http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/berrigan/cage.html.

LaBeouf's plagiarism, I suggest, should be considered in similar terms, as an iteration of a certain persistent attitude to copying as a creative act that finds its manifestation in related forms of creative production, a trajectory illustrative of contemporary models of writing. Like Berrigan's, LaBeouf's sources are significant as manifestations of his commitment to copying as a contemporary avant-garde gesture. Echoing Duchamp, for example, immediately foregrounds LaBeouf's interest in the ready-made. His recurring references to Lessing and Goldsmith inscribe *HowardCantour.com*, *Daniel Boring*, and LaBeouf's apologies into the contemporary framework of debates about creativity, authorship, and copyright. While drawing from Lessig can be seen as a justification of LaBeouf's acts in legal terms, an interest in Goldsmith's work offers a creative and critical point of reference. Promoting notions of free culture and creative commons, and of 'an updated notion of genius [that centres] around one's mastery of information,'[7] both Lessig and Goldsmith respectively move away from thinking about models of cultural production in proprietary terms and towards paradigms of creativity based on a culture of collecting, organising, curating and sharing content. Goldsmith is an important, recurring point of reference for LaBeouf, and this juxtaposition of their work positions LaBeouf at the centre of contemporary debates about appropriation, repurposing, and twenty-first century paradigms of creativity, or 'uncreativity,' as Goldsmith refers to contemporary aesthetic developments. Discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Goldsmith's creative and critical works propagate a shift in the understanding of creativity for the current cultural moment, triggered by the emergence of now ubiquitous digital technology. For Goldsmith, in the contemporary context, practices such as LaBeouf's assume a creative quality and are a manifestation of characteristic habits of textual production and dissemination; 'it is not plagiarism in the digital age – it's repurposing,'[8] argues Goldsmith. 'It is not plagiarism in the digital age – it's repurposing,'[9] suggests LaBeouf, without acknowledgement.

This approach, LaBeouf argues, contributes to an ongoing creative project as an expression of 'meta-modernist performance art.'[10] His two artist's manifestos,

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[7] Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 1. Hereafter UW.
[8] Kenneth Goldsmith, Twitter post, 2 January 2014, https://twitter.com/kg_ubu/status/418787567354785792.
[9] Shia LaBeouf, '"Authorship is Censorship" – Bleeding Cool in Conversation with Shia LaBeouf', interview by Rich Johnson, *Bleeding Cool*, 2 January 2014, accessed 01 September 2014, http://www.bleedingcool.com/2014/01/authorship-is-censorship-bleeding-cool-in-conversation-with-shia-labeouf/.
[10] Shia LaBeouf, 'Twitter as Art', tweeted by LaBeouf in January 2014 (@thecampaignbook), the manifesto has since been taken down but is widely available online. See, for example:

positioning his work as meta-modernist and intentionally uncreative, are also composed by means of copying, repurposing Luke Turner's meta-modernism manifesto, passed off as LaBeouf's, [11] and excerpts of Goldsmith's *Uncreative Writing,*[12] respectively. His recent 'Twitter as Art' statement is a mash-up, bringing together a selection of performance art manifestos by Marilyn Arsem, Scott Wichmann and Marina Abramvić, as well as passages copied verbatim from *Painters Painting,* a 1973 documentary. 'All art is either plagarisum [sic] or revolution,'[13] LaBeouf suggests, (mis)quoting Paul Gauguin. However, the notion of plagiarism today, as acts such as LaBeouf's seem to imply, requires a radical reconceptualisation.

Where instances of creative expression are concerned, 'all rights and remedies [might be] reserved'[14] under the rule of copyright law, as the 'cease and desist' notice concludes, but LaBeouf's stunt seems to imply that in the contemporary context their reach, enforceability, and applicability prove limited. Charges of tastelessness, immorality, and bad art aside, LaBeouf's case is a reminder that the idea of culture as property is not an unquestionable absolute. Rather, as Jonathan Lethem contends, it is 'an ongoing social negotiation, tenuously forged, endlessly revised, and imperfect in its every incarnation.' [15] When the paradigms of information production and dissemination change with the rise to prominence of novel media platforms, so does thinking about authorship and creativity, a trajectory true both in the context of the now familiar, historical, 'old' technologies and as a manifestation of the contemporary new media cultural transformations. Projects such as LaBeouf's contribute to a collective attempt at renegotiating the standards that are otherwise taken for granted. In this thesis my interest resides in a similar preoccupation with shifting attitudes towards creativity today, triggered by the emergence of new technologies that incite new behaviours of textual production and information dissemination while exposing the restrictions and inadequacies of the models applied to define, control, and institutionalise them – both in creative and legal terms.

Although removed as a result of the copyright controversy, *HowardCantour.com* and LaBeouf's tweets remain available online. This widespread

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http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/gossip/shia-labeouf-bizarre-behavior-performance-art-article-1.1587660.

[11] LaBeouf name was temporarily included in the byline of Luke Turner's *Metamodernist Manifesto*. It is preserved on Turner's website: http://luketurner.com/labeouf-ronkko-turner/metamodernist-manifesto/. Turner's manifesto, now in its original format, can be viewed here: http://www.metamodernism.org/.

[12] Shia LaBeouf, '#stopcreating', *The New Inquiry*, 20 January 2014, accessed 10 September 2014, http://thenewinquiry.com/features/stopcreating/.

[13] LaBeouf, 'Twitter as Art'.

[14] Kump to Wolf.

[15] Jonathan Lethem, 'The Ecstasy of Influence', in *The Ecstasy of Influence: Nonfictions, etc.* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012), 101.

preservation and availability of the material officially deleted posits significant questions about the nature of the copy in the digital environment. The dynamic of production and dissemination of content online is foregrounded here not as a space of the original creation but of the inevitable copy, of its persistent proliferation, not only independent but, importantly, irrespective of the status of the original. The original as a centre and source of meaning, in the context, becomes only an illusory centre, as I argue in more detail in Chapter 1.

This logic of the digital copy also finds its manifestation in LaBeouf's complete act. LaBeouf got away with plagiarism, until he did not, his transgression identified by a Twitter user almost immediately after the release of *HowardCantour.com* online.[16] If, as Warhol (appropriating McLuhan) puts it, art is what you can get away with, then LaBeouf's performance is an example of how not to do art. But, perhaps, getting away with plagiarism is not the point here. Perhaps plagiarism in not an appropriate term to describe LaBeouf's act. His uncreative practice acquires an altogether different status if viewed as a clear manifestation of the influence of the contemporary digital, networked culture on the practices of information dissemination and artistic expression, on the status of the copy. As Goldsmith puts it, 'plagiarizing well is hard to do.'[17] Plagiarising in the social-media driven culture proves an impossible feat. In this context, questions that need to be raised in relation to plagiarism shift away from ethics and towards an aesthetics of borrowing pre-published content. The change in attitude might be a result of increasing availability of all published content online and of simple, widely accessible tools that make plagiarism detection possible. If a 'trial by Google'[18] enables any online user to detect LaBeouf's plagiarism only a few hours after his work or a statement are released online, then the motivations behind acts of copying must, inevitably, change. In the context of ubiquitous digital media plagiarism as an attempt at passing someone else's ideas as one's own ceases to be achievable. It is the sense of an impossibility of a copy that provokes a proliferation of copies but generated as an expression of transgressive creative gestures achieved though inherently uncreative acts. Plagiarism seen as such is not antithetical to creativity but rather, as Lethem argues, a necessary condition of

[16] LaBeouf's sources identified by a Twitter user point to a dynamic not only of writing but also detecting plagiarism now driven by new media channels of information dissemination, an issue discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 with reference to Helene Hegemann's *Axolotl Roadkill* (2010).
[17] Kenneth Goldsmith, Interview by Trace William Cowen, *Nailed*, 8 January 2014, accessed 18 August 2014, http://www.nailedmagazine.com/interview/interview-with-kenneth-goldsmith-by-trace-william-cowen/.
[18] David Shields, *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2010), 38.

all writing and creativity, and organically connected to it.[19] Plagiarism, then – the hyper-fake – is not committed for the sake of plagiarism; rather, as David Shields puts it, it is 'a way to get at [the] essence of [the] real,'[20] the real that is increasingly defined by the logic of the virtual and its reliance on acts of copying.

There is a certain sense that LaBeouf's complete work of plagiarism came together as an afterthought, an attempt at reframing an unambiguous instance of plagiarism as a carefully constructed performance to avoid the consequences of copyright infringement. LaBeouf, by choosing Goldsmith, Duchamp, or Abramović as his sources, makes a stand about the status of his copy as an avant-garde project. His self-fashioning as an experimental performance artist is a conscious choice to shift attention away from the illegality to the aesthetics of the act (an approach not dissimilar from Goldsmith's practice, as I argue in Chapter 3). But this is exactly why LaBeouf's case serves as a useful starting point for thinking about issues of authorship, creativity, and originality as they impinge on the contemporary art scene. It points to the urgency and ubiquity of the debates and to the dynamic of the environment that generates them. That LaBeouf has an extensive knowledge of the history of appropriation art is a possibility; that *HowardCantour.com*, released two years before the plagiarism controversy started, had been created to incite the uncreative performance that followed is likely. But there is also a chance that it is the exigency of the current debates about open sourcing, file sharing, copyright in the digital age, the ubiquity of the debates about information dissemination and circulation online, and the ease of accessing materials about them that collectively enabled a construction of LaBeouf's defence that was only one Google search away, collated as a publicity rather than an artist statement. And while the approach might raise questions about the creative qualities of LaBeouf's art, the controversy touches at the core of the contemporary cultural condition that drives the aesthetic developments discussed in this thesis.

Perhaps most telling as a manifestation of an increasingly proliferating culture of celebrity art (Joaquin's Phoenix's *I'm still Here*, James Franco's various artistic endeavours), the role of the social media information machine, 'generational aversion to "giving credit"'[21] fostered by habits of sharing information online, and related

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[19] Jonathan Lethem, 'I'm suggesting [originality] is an overrated virtue', interview by Harvey Blume, *The Boston Globe*, 4 March 2007, accessed 24 February 2013, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/03/04/qa_jonathan_lethem/?page=full.

[20] Shields, 79.

[21] Trace William Cowen, 'Shia on the Moon: The Necessary Dissection of Howard Cantour, *Glide Magazine*, 20 December 2013, accessed 20 September 2014, http://www.glidemagazine.com/hiddentrack/shia-on-the-moon-the-necessary-dissection-of-howard-cantour/.

popular culture consumerism, LaBeouf's act is nevertheless interesting as a characteristic manifestation of what I see as a persistent contemporary tendency to create by means of copying pre-published content occurring at an unprecedented level. Acts of plagiarising a short story, an artist statement, a performance piece, plagiarising apologies for plagiarism, although dismissed in LaBeouf's case as instances of copyright infringement and plagiarism by law and media respectively, should be seen, I argue, as neither. Rather, LaBeouf's tenacious copying should be considered a manifestation of an emergent aesthetic attitude particularly pervasive today, described in this thesis as a condition of iteration.

As I suggest, by means of qualifying Lethem's logic, practices of copying today should be considered a necessary condition of the current cultural moment. While notions of plagiarism, copyright infringement, and iteration all imply that forms of authorship are defined in relation to a shared preoccupation with means of creative production informed by acts of copying, the base assumptions about the essence of creativity and originality differ significantly where the first two concepts and iteration are concerned. The logic of both plagiarism and copyright infringement favours originality of creation, where originality is synonymous with, simply, not copying (the legal notion of originality is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1). Iteration, on the other hand, recognises the creative potential of copying; iteration, as I define it in this thesis, is a tendency to repeat available material as a creative gesture. While copyright infringement and plagiarism are preoccupied with questions of whether copying has occurred, copying is always already implied in iteration. Thinking about creative practice as iterative makes necessary a completely new set of questions. It is this distinction, one, I argue, most prominently foregrounded in the contemporary context, that is assumed here as a framework for discussing contemporary attitudes towards creativity, as a manifestation of a shift in aesthetics defined as an expression of the Iterative turn.

In line with the dominant logic, LaBeouf's acts are a case of a 'clear copyright infringement and misappropriation of Daniel Clowes's work.'[22] Dismissed as a 'blatant copy,' and a manifestation of 'improper and outlandish conduct,' the derivative nature of LaBeouf's 'foolishness' fails to comply with the copyright paradigms of authorship and originality. Similar thinking pervades popular understanding of what it means to create, echoed in the media debates about LaBeouf's plagiarism, also evocative of the controversies incited by the publications of J.D. California's *60 Years Later* (2009), Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), and Helene Hegemann's *Axolotl Roadkill* (2010) (all discussed further in

[22] Kump to Wolf.

Chapter 1). While often considered a manifestation of an unlawful practice, plagiarism is not a legal term. Unlike copyright infringement, plagiarism is an ethical category. Although inherently transgressive, acts of plagiarism do not, in all instances, constitute copyright infringement. As Laurie Stearns explains,

> in some ways the concept of plagiarism is broader than infringement, in that it can include copying of ideas, or of expression not protected by copyright, that would not constitute infringement [...] fundamental to both plagiarism and copyright infringement is wrongful copying from a preexisiting work. But the form, the amount, and the sources of the copying prohibited as copyright infringement are different from those of the copying condemned as plagiarism.[23]

But, as it is often the case, the logic and the media rhetoric of plagiarism surrounding LaBeouf's performance mirror the legal understanding of copyright infringement. There is a sense that plagiarism is synonymous with a failure of a creative process. Plagiarism, as Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy put it, 'is perceived as a problem [...]: "using someone else's words without telling whose they are or where you got them"; "stealing other people's ideas or words."' [24] Plagiarism, then, is considered synonymous with theft and the understanding of the notion derives, Marilyn Randall explains, from the Latin origins of the term, *plagium* meaning 'to kidnap a person,' used only with reference to children, servants or slaves, people who could be considered in proprietary terms. [25] The same logic translates into paradigms of creative production as soon as creative outputs are considered property, as defined by Intellectual Property law. 'Once it becomes possible to think of literary work as property,' as Deborah Halbert suggests, 'it becomes possible to "steal" that property.'[26]

There is a sense here a copy is almost a taboo from the point of view of both plagiarism and copyright infringement. However, my argument stems from an assumption that as technologies and economies of writing change, so does the inherent understanding of authorship and the dominant attitudes towards both creativity and plagiarism. We find ourselves now, as I suggest in this thesis, at a transitional cultural stage – at the Iterative turn – characterised by the propensity to

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[23] Laurie Stearns, 'Copy Wrong: Plagiarism, Process, Property, and the Law', in *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, eds. Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 9.
[24] Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy, Introduction to *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, eds. Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), xv-xvi.
[25] Marilyn Randall, *Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit, and Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 61.
[26] Deborah Halbert, 'Poaching and Plagiarising: Property, Plagiarism, and Feminist Futures', in *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World,* eds. Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 111.

copy as an expression of a creative practice. Perhaps, this contemporary persistence of acts of copying, of which LaBeouf's performance is only one of many examples, should be seen as a shift, to borrow from Marcus Boon, 'in relation to the forces that constitute that taboo.'[27] If copying emerges as an increasingly prominent avenue of creative expression, then perhaps the base assumptions of creativity need to shift accordingly. This thesis proposes one possible way of thinking about creativity in response to these assumptions. My interests here reside not in instances of plagiarism or copyright infringement *per se*, but rather in the cultural condition that triggers the proliferation of acts of copying, a condition that affords their reconceptualisation as a creative, aesthetic category. This approach grows out of a realisation that to recognise an instance of plagiarism, copyright infringement, or an example of iteration as plagiarism, infringement, or a creative act, is to pass judgement in line with dominant tenets, social, cultural, legal, political, and economic norms and presuppositions that motivate these judgements. Hence, it is the texts of culture, as well as, and perhaps most importantly, the dogmas and the judgements they breed that contribute to my argument. What I am interested in is both the cultural moment of the emergence of iteration as a creative practice and the possibility of transforming the paradigms of thinking about the established paradigms of creativity, the possibility of transforming models of creativity as much as judgements about their expression and, by extension, the critical apparatus for conceptualising them.

In Chapter 1 I set out a framework for the broader project in an attempt to define the Iterative turn and position it in relation to current visual arts, literary, publishing, and legal landscapes. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 offer a discussion of approaches to contemporary iterative writing and possible ways of conceptualising the means by which they engage with notions of originality, creativity, and authorship characteristic of the Iterative turn. While I focus first and foremost on literary texts – an interest key to defining the contemporary preoccupation with copying that is language rather than image based (in contrast to, for example, the influential Pictures Generation of the 1970s, a trajectory discussed in Chapters 1 and 3) – I draw extensively from the arts broadly conceived: the media and media theory, philosophy, literary and art theory, as well as case law and critical legal studies to arrive at a more comprehensive formulation of the aesthetics of iteration for the contemporary cultural condition. As such, the core literature of this thesis, both creative and critical, is drawn from a range of disciplines. But hybridity of discourse, I suggest, is a feature

[27] Marcus Boon, *In Praise of Copying* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 101.

of creativity today and a successful critical framework for discussing it requires equally hybrid tools.

Literary texts discussed in this thesis are all inherently uncreative, all composed by means of copying, or rather, as I suggest, by iterative means. None of them, I argue, should be understood as instances of plagiarism or copyright infringement – although some, as Chapter 1 shows, are problematic from the legal point of view. My analysis is developed with reference to three experimental creative approaches to writing which I consider illustrative of a range of key aesthetic attitudes that dominate the contemporary avant-garde poetic scene. Erasure, discussed in Chapter 2, is a method of creative writing reliant on redacting source texts, erasing, crossing out, or blacking out fragments to create poetry. Transcription (Chapter 3) is a method of writing that relies on the retyping of complete texts verbatim, as literature. Similarly to erasure and transcription, code-generated poetry in Chapter 4 relies on sourcing pre-published content to create new works of literature but composed by engaging languages and tools of computer programming.

My reasons for focusing on the contemporary avant-garde are twofold. Practical considerations cannot be underestimated. As I show in Chapter 1, the mainstream culture, still grounded in the familiar and safe understanding of authorship as an inspired, singular act, driven by the logic of increasingly problematic copyright models and publishing practice built on profit margins (and significantly impacted by the legal paradigms), cannot accommodate the experimental and subversive impulses that define the Iterative turn. While dominant literary forms remain too constrained by the prevailing apparatus, marginal in economic and legal terms, the contemporary avant-garde emerges as a particularly prominent space in which to shape the emergent aesthetics. As this thesis will show, there is a sense of permissiveness to creatively engage with paradigms of authorship, originality, and creativity in ways that break with the 'norm' to arrive at new models of thinking about creating today, pronounced among experimental writers. The avant-garde authorship and publishing, both historically and today, exist on the fringes of market or institutional structures. And while the established values of 'originality' and 'authorship' are constitutive of the institutional frameworks, the status of the avant-garde allows a certain disregard for established standards, flaunting the rules without institutional implications but with major potential to influence the very institution it contests. Hence, this thesis describes the contemporary, iterative avant-garde as a cultural force, one that can be represented in Foucauldian terms, as symptomatic of broader power struggles inherent in cultural formation. Foucault writes:

> rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal relationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. For example, to find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity. And what we mean by legality in the field of illegality.[28]

It is the insanity and illegality of the iterative avant-garde that should be seen as a trigger of the Iterative turn as the foundation for a more universal transformation of paradigms of creativity. The avant-garde seen as such becomes synonymous, as Goldsmith puts it, with a copyright loophole,[29] where breaking the rules emerges as a rule itself, offering means of interrogating the familiar models that shape the contemporary creative landscape.

But my preoccupation with avant-garde texts is also grounded in the logic of the avant-garde itself. There is arguably an inherently avant-garde approach implied in any attempt to transform established creative paradigms. The concept of the avant-garde (or 'advance guard') points quite aptly, as Matei Călinescu suggests, to a 'sharp sense of [...] nonconformism, courageous precursory exploration.'[30] It evokes an orientation towards radically new. It is as a site of possibility and exploration that the avant-garde principles remain particularly relevant now, fundamental to defining the possibilities of a turn in aesthetics. Echoing the attitudes of the earlier avant-gardes, the poetic avant-garde for the twenty-first century will be presented here as primarily preoccupied with notions of authorship, the possibilities as well as constraints of the current cultural moment for devising new ways of thinking about what it means to create. The history of the avant-gardes is presented here as a history of changing attitudes towards authorship, a framework that informs both the overall conceptual framework for my argument and individual discussions of representative contemporary avant-garde forms. This relationship to historical avant-gardes is important and, as I suggest, a defining feature of the current neo-neo-avant-garde aesthetics. The logic of the Iterative turn resides not only in an interest in repetition and reproduction of texts, but, most importantly, in a repetition of earlier avant-garde gestures, in a repetition of both texts and attitudes at the same time, as suggested in Chapter 1. The formal experimentation with repetition is a symptom that can only be realised fully when both the repetition of form itself and that of an attitude that incites it converge, where attitudes become form. The thesis presents poetic forms that, as I

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[28] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8.4 (1982), 780.
[29] Kenneth Goldsmith, interview by Marcus Boon (unedited transcript), *Bomb,* 117 (2011), accessed 28 April 2014, http://bombmagazine.org/article/6071/.
[30] Matei Călinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 95.

show, are not new, but they repeat those devised by the earlier avant-gardes under the guise of and as a response to contemporary new media developments. It is important to think of these contemporary avant-gardes as unoriginal, as iterations. It is precisely this iteratibility that becomes the defining feature of iterative writing today.

Such an understanding of writing at the Iterative turn informs my discussions in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, positioning each instance of contemporary experimental poetics in relation to the avant-garde practices it evokes. As such, my reading of contemporary erasure is grounded both in similar 1970s literary experiments in works of Ronald Johnson and Tom Phillips, as well as related visual arts examples, e.g. Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953) and Marcel Broodthaers's appropriation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Un Coup de Dés'/ 'A Throw of Dice' (1969). Transcription is presented as following on from the Pictures Generation, Andy Warhol's art and philosophy, and developed as a reiteration of broader assumptions of conceptualism in art as it developed in the 1960s. John Cage's performance scores and the project of Fluxus serve as a reference point for reading code poetics. My interest here is not in 'great artists,'[31] or 'mature poets'[32] who steal because of a sense of superiority and institutional approval, escaping the negative implications so inherent in accusations of plagiarism purely on the basis of a judgement passed because of who they are and not what they do.[33] Rather, my focus is on texts that are a manifestation of a much more salient attitude as a manifestation of an emergent aesthetic form for the contemporary Iterative turn.

Despite its admittedly wide scope, this thesis is not a survey or an attempt at an exhaustive representation of the contemporary avant-garde literary scene – a recent monograph, *Nobody's Business: Twenty-First Century Avant-Garde Poetics* (2013) by Brian M. Reed does just that. Instead, my interest here resides in proposing an intellectual framework for interrogating and rethinking contemporary models of authorship and originality through the lens of key developments in experimental poetics today. But Reed's study offers a useful reference point for positioning my understanding of the current shift in aesthetics in relation to the dominant approaches to contemporary writing. *Nobody's Business* is representative of the prevailing stand that associates the contemporary propensity for uncreative writing with a shift in aesthetic attitudes. But Reed's understanding of this shift resides in a

[31] 'Bad artists copy, great artists steal.' Attributed to Pablo Picasso.
[32] 'Immature poets imitate, mature poets steal' [T.S. Eliot, 'Philip Massinger', in *Essays on Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World: 1932), 143].
[33] I paraphrase M.H.Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, (New York: OUP, 1953).

move away from allusive, lyrical poetry, and towards a poetics that is anti-intellectual, to poetry as anti-poetry. Reed does not dismiss contemporary writing on the basis of its alleged anti-intellectualism. Rather, he sees the approach as a manifestation of contemporary aesthetics: 'the radical gesture of negation [...] its blank indifference to literary history, its scorn for conventional markers of craft, its disdain for polish and perfection' are the very attributes that, Reed suggest, make uncreative writing appealing.[34] Foregrounding deskilling as a feature of writing today is a popular means of thinking about instances of writing discussed in this thesis. But it is a stance, I argue, that misses the point and is driven by an interrogation grounded in the wrong set of framing questions.

My argument, similarly to Reed's, grows out of the recognition of a shift in contemporary aesthetic attitudes, but, I suggest, it cannot be accurately described when considered in line with Reed's and related frameworks. I argue here against approaches such as Reed's, as I present the change in creative attitudes not as a turn away from skill but towards an alternative skill set. This writing by alternative means is, I argue, deeply and self-consciously rooted in literary and aesthetic histories, as manifested in the association of contemporary iterative poetics with earlier avant-gardes. Iterative writing should be seen as a complex system of creative practice and critical thought. While for Reed works of authors such as Travis Macdonald (Chapter 2), Kenneth Goldsmith (Chapter 3), or Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland (Chapter 4) are valuable as a manifestation of contemporary attitudes, the attitudes themselves are seen as 'lacking in more forthrightly lyrical, hence more old-fashioned feeling poetries.'[35] Unlike Reed, I present examples of such writing as an expression of a new form in its own right, complex, sophisticated, lyrical, and affective, but one that requires an alternative intellectual framework in order to be recognised as such. Texts discussed here seem 'lacking' in skill, affect, and lyricism only if the familiar categories of literariness are applied, categories that fail to describe the contemporary cultural moment and the aesthetic attitudes it breeds. As such, this thesis is an attempt at arriving at possible alternative models for thinking about writing the Iterative turn. It is an attempt at writing the new when a new set of categories has not, as yet, been established.

In his recent book, Patrick Greaney refers to examples of such creative copying, both historical and contemporary, as quotational practices. According to Greaney, quotation is a historicising method. By repeating the past, it evokes the

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[34] Brian M. Reed, *Nobody's Business: Twenty-First Century Avant-Garde Poetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), xii.
[35] Ibid, xiv.

possibilities of 'the past's unrealized futures.'[36] For Greaney, Walter Benjamin's *The Arcade's Project* (1927-1940), the 1970s poetry and artist books of Marcel Broodthaers, and Vanessa Place's or Kenneth Goldsmith's contemporary conceptual poetics all exemplify a quotational approach to writing. I suggest that Greaney's take is too general and too narrow at the same time to successfully account for the contemporary ubiquity of copying as a creative practice. A distinction has to be drawn, I argue, between historically similar creative experiments and contemporary practices to account for their persistence and the distinctive characteristics of the cultural condition that triggers them. I posit that, in the contemporary context, copying and repeating texts manifests a broad, pervasive, cultural tendency. An attempt to engage with questions of the past, memory, and the archive and to interrogate their possibilities is only one issue addressed today by uncreative writing (a question also explored in this thesis, with reference to erasure writing in Chapter 2). As such, a more inclusive but historically specific category is needed to accurately describe the emergence of the creative practices discusses here. As I suggest, writing by means of rewriting is more accurately described today as an iterative rather than a quotational practice.

For Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, for example, quotation, reference, and attribution are key to constructing their meticulously referential poetics; for Berrigan, mentioned above, copying is a collagist gesture, bringing together disparate fragments to create unambiguously recycled, though new, texts. But what characterises such copying as a quotation or a collage is a commitment to bringing attention to the source, recognising and reinforcing the authority of the quoted author and text. The elements of a collage, as Craig Dworkin puts it, 'always maintain a certain autonomy, and they resist the subsumation of one by the other.'[37] Today, I suggest, the impulse to copy is informed by a different strategy. As Robert Fitterman explains, the focus today is on new contexts rather than new texts that practices of copying generate (I discuss this trajectory in more detail in Chapter 1). While 'collage brings appropriated materials together, via the composition of the artist, to a singular expression' the iterative writer today takes an unmodified source to reframe it 'in order to call attention to its new context, to cull meaning from the shift,' in the process promoting 'the instability of language as it pours into these new contexts.'[38] This

[36] Patrick Greaney, *Quotational Practices: Repeating the Future in Contemporary Art* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), x.
[37] Craig Dworkin, *Reading the Illegible* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 14.
[38] Robert Fitterman, 'Identity Theft', in *Rob the Plagiarist: Others Writing by Robert Fitterman 2000-2008* (New York: Roof Books, 2009), 15.

distinction is key to thinking about writing today as iterative rather than quotational. A call for quotation suggests, as Lethem observes, 'realms where standards of accurate citation are necessary and sensible,'[39] it implies creativity that complies with the dominant strategies and systematised thinking in line with academic, legal, or publishing standards. Iteration, on the other hand, is a space that invites an interrogation of these very standards, a space of creative subversion and innovation, a space of a turn in aesthetics. While quotation is inherently referential and committed to dominant creative paradigms, iteration happens outside the quotation marks. Writing understood in line with Fitterman's logic makes the act of quoting of secondary importance to instead create new situations, to 'investigate uncertainty, which in turn, investigates new ways to potentially realize our place as text artists in a network culture.'[40] What I am interested in is this possibility of the potential for alternative thinking.

As such, texts discussed here are presented as both creative and critical, as tools to reflect on the creative condition of contemporary culture. Their self-reflexive iterability can be seen as a method of not just writing poetry but also theorising the very paradigms of writing. This is writing that, to borrow from Marjorie Perloff, 'is neither lyric poetry nor literary theory or cultural criticism but an inspired blend of all three.'[41] At the iterative turn, writing a poem and writing criticism can both be performed by employing the same gestures, where copying is a manifestation of formal and aesthetic preferences and a critical tool – an attitude manifested in Lethem's 'Ecstasy', Shields's *Reality Hunger*, and Fitterman's *Rob the Plagiarist*, all referred to above. 'Here,' Peter Jaeger maintains, 'theoretical research is not something that is applied to a text by a critic; it is instead a tool for mediating the production of text.'[42] But, as Dworkin observes, 'what were, for [the] modernists, isolated instances of literary daring or dramatic special effects, have become for their successors the very procedures by which entire books are written,'[43] books of poetry and criticism alike. The conflation of critical and creative writing as a defining feature of the Iterative turn is an issue foregrounded most explicitly in Chapter 4. In its attempt at investigating the possibilities of writing criticism at the Iterative turn, it goes beyond a discussion of yet another iterative form of writing. Instead, Chapter 4 poses an extended conclusion to my argument in its move towards a new model of a

[39] Lethem, 'Ecstasy', 121.
[40] Fitterman, 'Identity', 15.
[41] Marjorie Perloff, *Differentials : Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy* (Tuscaloosa, Al : University of Alabama Press, 2004), 263.
[42] Peter Jaeger, "But Could I Make a Living From It": Jeff Derksen's Modular Form", *Canadian Literature*, 203 (2009), 39.
[43] Dworkin, *Reading*, xxii.

hybrid, distributed form of writing that engages questions of the intersection of theory and poetry, reflections on the compositional practice and the broader contemporary culture, in order to make visible the cultural processes behind them.

Writing that might seem 'anti-intellectual' is presented here as a project heavily invested in critical thought and its own criticism. This approach is implied in my framing notion of 'iteration,' itself an appropriation of Jacques Derrida's term, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 1. Thinking about writing today through this reference to Derrida is aimed as an indication of a propensity for theory that manifests itself in contemporary iterative poetry. In my approach, I build on both Jaeger's and Dworkin's understanding of the conflation of theory and poetics today. Dworkin sees contemporary experimental poems as texts that 'help us to think through certain ideas more fully, many of these works constitute not merely illustrations, but literal and concrete enactments of theoretical concepts.'[44] In line with this assumption, I read erasure as an expression of Derrida's *écrtiture sous rature*, transcription as event informed by paradigms of the impossibility of its repetition, in line with Deleuze's, Derrida's, and Badiou's definitions, and interpret code with reference to theories of performativity. But approaching texts discussed here as and through theory serves a double function. It is a way of formulating a possible theory of poetic forms in order to, at the same time, interrogate the praxis driving the processes of their authorship. Here, as Pierre Bourdieu asserts, 'the production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work.'[45] This project is speculative, in the same sense that any attempt at theorising a contemporary, emergent aesthetics is exploratory and aimed at devising an alternative strategy for thinking about creativity with regard for conditions under which writing today takes place. In my argument, the very concepts of authorship undergo a deconstruction, using the tools most appropriate for the purpose, i.e. the language of deconstruction. The theoretical inclinations evoke an engagement with the possibilities of a turn, where not just creation but the interrogation of its possibility and related methods come to the fore, where *poiesis* transforms into *autopoiesis*, as argued in Chapter 4.[46]

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 35.

[46] Emerging at the time frequently described as 'after theory,' this propensity for theory at the Iterative turn might seem unusual and an unlikely development. But perhaps this tendency is a characteristic manifestation of the philosophy of iteration and should itself be seen as an iterative gesture that contributes to contemporary aesthetics. If, as discussed in Chapter 3, the avant-garde today is a neo-neo-avant-garde that repeats earlier avant-gardes, then inherent in this repetition must also be an iteration of the characteristic neo-avant-garde engagement with the contemporary debates at the time of the so called high theory, i.e. the language poet's interest in semiotic possibilities of language as defined by post-structuralism, or the widespread preoccupation with Roland Barthes's notion of the death of the author.

Today, the context that triggers iterative thinking is digital. As Lev Manovich suggests, it is technology, more than any critical impulse that should be seen as a driving force behind developments in modern paradigms of creativity. As a vehicle of progress and innovation, technology, then, becomes inherently associated with the logic of the avant-garde, perhaps as its tool. For Manovich, it is the computer software that manifests a form in which the avant-garde project is being realised in the twenty-first century; 'on the one hand, software codifies and naturalizes the techniques of the old avant-garde. On the other hand, software's new techniques of working with media represent the new avant-garde of the meta-media society.'[47] But Manovich's avant-garde loses its radical potential, it recycles for the sake of recycling; 'it is no longer concerned with seeing or representing the world in new ways but rather accessing and using previously accumulated media in new ways.'[48] Although I argue with Manovich that means of recycling and re-contextualising content to create new works should be considered a contemporary creative paradigm, I see Manovich's perceptions of the logic of information as dangerously reductionist. I argue for the inherent critical potential carried by this new media avant-garde that emerges at the intersection of principles of the historical avant-garde and new technological developments. As such, the framework developed here is influenced by but not limited to the digital environment. Instead, the contemporary digital culture is considered as a contextual framework, an apparatus that exerts a significant impact on the dynamic of creative practices both online and offline. It is the backlash of the Internet copy-paste culture of ubiquitous sharing rather than that culture itself that forms the context for my argument, assumed as an attempt at defining a universal shift in thinking about creative practice today. Digital technologies are referred to here as a Heideggerian essence of technology rather than as technology itself. As such, preference is given to the notion of 'postproduction' over 'digital culture', following Nicolas Bourriaud in his attempt to describe the contemporary cultural condition. While contemporary digital technologies heavily inform the dynamic of the postproduction culture, the technology is only one aspect of this much more comprehensive cultural ecology and of the processes that inform the contemporary aesthetic shift this thesis strives to define. The postproduction framework is adopted here as a means of firmly positioning iterative writing in a distinct cultural moment and is discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

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[47] Lev Manovich, 'Avant-garde as Software', University of California repository, 2002, Accessed 18 September 2014, http://www.uoc.edu/artnodes/espai/eng/art/manovich1002/manovich1002.pdf, 11.
[48] Ibid, 8.

This thesis is not written in praise of plagiarism or copyright infringement. It also does not posit a defence or an indictment of projects such as LaBeouf's. It is an attempt at reconceptualising the concept of the copy for contemporary creative culture, building on notions such as Goldsmith's uncreative writing, and Perloff's unoriginal genius.[49] My attempt is not to argue for the abolition of authorship, I do not see 'authorship as censorship,'[50] in line with LaBeouf's proclamations. The author and notions of authorship remain at the core of this thesis, only reconceptualised to accommodate the methods of contemporary writing. Mine is an attempt at arriving at possible ways of redefining the definitions of authorship, creativity, and originality that forms the core of my argument. The need for such a debate is triggered, I argue, by a change in the widespread approach towards the means of production of knowledge. Today, as Shields suggests,

> copies have been dethroned; the economic model built on them is collapsing [...] copies are no longer the basis of wealth. Now relationships, links, connection, and sharing are. Value has shifted away from a copy toward the many ways to recall, annotate, personalize, edit, authenticate, display, mark, transfer, and engage a work. Art is a conversation, not a patent office.[51]

The model more appropriate for contemporary practices requires a move away from 'the Western philosophical tradition defining the autonomous individual as the source of all knowledge,'[52] and towards a mode that is built on collaboration, distribution, and multiple authorships. This shift is reliant on a recognition of the constructedness of the dominant notions of authorship. According to Goldsmith 'we are moving from authorship to non-authorship'[53] and LaBeouf's film seems to be an expression of the attitude. His 'plagiarised' *HowardContour* might not acknowledge the sources, but it also does not make claims to authorship. While *HowardContour.com* is a film by Shia LaBeouf, the director, the credits do not include any information about the authorship of the script. But the lack of the clearly defined authorial framework, I suggest, still points to a model of authorship, only established in line with a different set of categories of authorship and creativity. LaBeouf's short emerges as a hybrid expression of authorship that is distributed, its dynamics enabled by the tools and practices of content creation, curation, and sharing in the postproduction environment and should be viewed as such. Goldsmith's non-

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[49] Marjorie Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010). Hereafter UG.
[50] LaBeouf, 'Twitter as Art'.
[51] Shields, 29.
[52] Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing* (Carbondale, Il: Southern Illinois University, 1992), 73.
[53] Goldsmith, Interview by Cowen.

authorship is authorship by other, open source, digital, means; it is authorship in an expanded field that relies on acts of selecting, arranging, and curating content to create new works. This thesis investigates the possibility of arriving at a critical framework for conceptualising such practice as a dominant rather than marginalised and infringing approach.

CHAPTER 1

THE ITERATIVE TURN

As Stewart Home puts it, 'first there were modernists, then there were post-modernists, now there are plagiarists.'[54] Although hyperbolic in his attempt at defining changing attitudes towards creativity as they emerge in their respective cultural moments, in this statement Home points to a distinctive aesthetic shift, one, I suggest, of increasing prominence today. There is a sense here that plagiarism is an aesthetic category that has a literary history and that this history has a very clearly defined direction. Home's plagiarism emerges as historically contingent and following on from modernism and postmodernism. But if plagiarism can be seen as a natural successor to modern and postmodern thought and practice, then by implication, both modernism and postmodernism have to be understood as conditioned upon a codification of practices related to plagiarism, if not plagiarism itself.

What Home seems to imply, then, is that clear affinities can be drawn between dominant models of cultural production in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and an ongoing creative commitment to acts of copying. From modernist allusion,[55] through postmodern parody and pastiche,[56] to contemporary practices at the core of this thesis, there is a sense of a historical continuum that resides in thinking about modes of reproduction and repurposing materials that is evoked in Home's trajectory, with a marked historical increase in prominence of implications of copying for creative practice that reaches a characteristic focal point today. Whether described as plagiarist gestures, manifestations of remix or appropriation cultures, or what I describe here as an expression of the contemporary Iterative turn, the increasing notoriety of writing by means of reusing pre-published content posits challenges with

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[54] Stewart Home, *Plagiarism: Art as Commodity and Strategies for its Negotiation* (London: Aporia Press, 1987), back cover.

[55] Although allusion is not an exclusively modernist category, it is typically associated with a modernist writing tendency to reference in works such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* or T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In his 1923 review of *The Waste Land* Edgell Rickword described Eliot as 'a writer to whom originality is almost an inspiration, borrowing the greater number of his best lines, creating hardly any himself.' [Edgell Rickword, Review of 'The Waste Land', *TLS*, in *TLS*, 'Then and Now' series, 4 June 2009, accessed 10 September 2014, http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/reviews/other_categories/article758583.ece]. As Eliot himself explained in 'The Metaphysical Poets': 'Our civilisation comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various complex results. The poet must become more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into meaning.' [T.S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot,* ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Hardcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 65]. Elsewhere he wrote: 'not only the best but the most individual parts of [a poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.' [T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot,* ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Hardcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 38]

[56] The postmodern interest in parody will be discussed later in this chapter.

respect to categories in which to consider the practice. Today, at the time of ubiquitous information technologies, acts of writing, reading, and responding to the attitudes towards both prove an increasingly ambiguous feat. At the time when, on the one hand, the availability and accessibility of information is far greater than ever before and the development of information technology encourages a culture of communal creativity and free appropriation, increased efforts are also being put into place to introduce often controversial means of control of what has varyingly been described as a democracy and an anarchy (recent examples of Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) in the United States and attempts at an international ratification of Anti-Counterfighting Trade Agreement (ACTA) are a case in point). The mounting tensions between the propagators of the creative remix culture and the defenders of traditional copyright law generate contrasting rhetoric of tradition v. innovation, stability v. change, and print v. digital culture. This chapter is an attempt at describing these exact dynamics to argue that the tensions are particularly prominent today. In a convergence of theoretical, literary, and legal discourses my discussion here is an attempt at explaining the characteristics of this cultural framework as a trigger for the Iterative turn in literature, to contextualise my inquiry into iterative writing in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. As I argue, writing by means of appropriation, borrowing, plagiarism – writing by iterative means – finds its particular moment in contemporary culture and emerges not as a transgressive practice but rather as a characteristic attitude towards creativity manifestated in currently proliferating, emergent forms of writing.

1.1. APPROPRIATING ORIGINALITY

On April 25, 2013 the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, rather unexpectedly, ruled largely in favour of Richard Prince who, in 2011, was found guilty of copyright infringement for using photographs created by Patrick Cariou, collated and published in his *Yes, Rasta* book in 2000. This particular instance of Prince's controversial appropriation practice came to light when Cariou's exhibition plans were challenged by a gallery owner rejecting his images as an exhibit that had already 'been done'.[57] As Judge Deborah A. Batts noted, except for publication and through private sale, Cariou, the sole copyright holder, has neither previously exhibited his images nor issued licences or given consent for the image use. Although the images might not have been done under Cariou's name, they have been,

[57] *Cariou* v. *Prince*, 784 F. Supp. 2d 337 (2011).

nevertheless, exhibited, in an altered though identifiable form, appropriated by Prince and incorporated into his *Canal Zone* exhibit at the Gagosian Gallery in 2008.

Utilising forty-one of the *Yes, Rasta* photographs, the *Canal Zone* series relied heavily on Cariou's work, with twenty-eight out of twenty-nine pieces incorporating *Yes, Rasta* images. The appropriation methods employed in the *Canal Zone* ranged from both analogue and digital collages and mash-ups to image and size manipulation, with some composed solely of Carious's works, others incorporating elements of material appropriated from other authors [Figure 2].

FIGURE 2: PATRICK CARIOU, *YES, RASTA* AND RICHARD PRINCE, *CANAL ZONE*

Prince's exhibit attracted widespread attention and extensive media coverage, and proved a commercial success. As Batts noted,

> as a result of the exhibition and related marketing efforts, 8 of the canal zone paintings sold for a total of $10,480,000.00 [...] Seven other Canal Zone paintings were exchanged for art with an estimated value between $6,000.000.00 and $8,000.000.00. [...] Gagosian Gallery sold $6,7840.00 worth of Canal Zone exhibition catalogues.[58]

As such, the *Yes, Rasta* series gained prominence not as *Yes, Rasta* by Patrick Cariou but as *Canal Zone* by Richard Prince. As a result of Prince's appropriation, the status of Cariou's work changed – adding complexity to the dynamic implicitly established

[58] Ibid.

between the source and appropriated work in similar 'derivative' art practices. Prince's act of appropriation equalled Cariou's expropriation to trigger a resulting re-assignation of the status of the 'original' work. Paradoxically, Prince's source materials – Cariou's originals – have grown to be disregarded as derivative, as that which had already been done. And although the provenance of Prince's work is undisputed here, and the reliance on Cariou's work is openly acknowledged by Prince, the conflated rhetoric of celebrity capitalism and artistic originality contribute to a creative economy that discredits Cariou's work as unoriginal in the eyes of the gallery owner and the general public. Although Prince's appropriation art relies on engagement with acts inherently antithetic towards prevailing social and legal conventions of authorship, the gallery owner's attitude proved a clear manifestation of the exact approaches to creativity that Prince openly questions and subverts, an overt acknowledgement of Prince as a singular celebrity author, favoured over Cariou – to borrow from Abrams – 'not for what he made but what he was.'[59]

What transpires is a clear discrepancy between approaches to the so-called 'appropriation' practices within the artistic and legal contexts that stems from a disjunction between cultural and legal concepts of authorship. As an aesthetic category, appropriation exists as a long-standing method of subversive artistic production, where reusing existing material serves as a tool of artistic commentary, social critique, a means of making a political statement.[60] Appropriation is an avenue

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[59] Abrams, 248.

[60] Surprisingly, given the ubiquity of the practice in modern, postmodern, and contemporary culture, little comprehensive scholarship on the history, theory, or artistic manifestations of appropriation exists. As Jan Verwoert puts it, 'appropriation can be understood as one of the most basic procedures of modern art production' [Jan Verwoert, 'Apropos Appropriation: Why Stealing Images Today Feels Different', *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, 1.2 (2007), accessed 2 February 2013, http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html]. The term 'appropriation' as I use it here refers to cultural practices in which already authored material is used as a means of creating new works. While appropriation is a broad concept, and includes techniques ranging from collage, cutting and pasting, rephotography, to digital sampling and remixing, appropriation needs to be distinguished from related practices of adaptation and allusion. Julie Sanders's *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) offers a brief overview of the two practices but seems to build on the general lack of a more specific theory and history of the latter to conflate it with acts of adaptation. Only vaguely defined, for Sanders, appropriation should be understood as an extended or sustained adaptation [Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 32]. As such, Sanders's is a rebranded exploration in intertextuality, rather than a comprehensive study of appropriation in the arts. A volume dedicated to appropriation in the visual arts is available in the MIT/Whitechapel Gallery Documents of Contemporary Art, but, true to the format adopted in the series, the volume offers a brief introduction to appropriation and an anthologised collection of texts relevant to understanding the tendency [see: David Evans (ed.), *Appropriation* (London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2009)]. But, 'the history [and theory] of appropriation [...] remains to be written' [Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction, Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York, Lukas and Sternberg, 2002), 25. Hereafter PCAS]. While this thesis does not focus on writing either, thinking about appropriation in a variety of its historical

of commenting on contemporary culture at large, and the critique of hyper-capitalist, consumer simulacra culture itself, so prominent in the 1980s, lies at its inception. Read in the legal context, however, artistic appropriation proves highly inappropriate and tends to be considered on a par with copyright infringement, as Judge Batts's 2011 decision illustrates. Such reasoning is deeply rooted in two interdependent principles that govern copyright legislation. Copyright assumes inherent correlation between copyright protection and originality of a work, while protection afforded by copyright is always determined by the requirement of originality. As Nadia Walravens explains, 'it is possible to refute a work of art's "work" status if its originality cannot be shown by its author.'[61] The legal notion of originality, however, remains an ambiguous and under-defined concept that lacks unified approach in different legal systems. Under the U.S. Copyright Act, originality and fixation[62] are the only two requirements for copyrightability; in France the notion of originality is often linked to authorial expression and works are proclaimed original if they bear marks of author's personality; in British law every work is considered original if it is not a copy; on the international scale, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Berne Convention[63] does not define originality at all.[64]

What is clear, however, is the inherent correlation that copyright draws between the figure of the author and work's originality. Characteristically, the assignation of the status of the original work of art relies on and is subject to authorial contribution. The legal notion of originality resides in legal preoccupations with the author as the origin of the work. It is the possibility of an unambiguous assignation of authorship rather than qualities of creativity and novelty that are at the core of legal understanding of an original work. As Peter Jaszi and Martha Woodmansee put it,

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guises serves as a starting point and significantly informs my understanding of the contemporary Iterative turn.

[61] Nadia Walravens, 'The Concept of Originality and Contemporary Art', in *Dear Images: Art, Copyright and Culture,* eds. Daniel McClean and Karsten Schubert (London and Manchester: Institute of Contemporary Arts and Ridinghouse, 2002), 171.

[62] Although fixation is not a requirement under the Berne Convention, the U.S. law requires that the work be fixed in a tangible medium of expression to obtain copyright protection.

[63] Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, or the Berne Convention, is an international copyright agreement which operates as a multilateral system of reciprocal copyright privileges. Although copyright remains a local right, the signatories of the Convention recognise a set of basic rights and privileges. These include: the obligation to recognise the copyright of works of authors from other signatory countries in the same way a member state recognises the copyright in works produced by its own citizens; the obligation to provide strong minimum standards for copyright, i.e. the length of protection by copyright. [Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, 9 September 1886].

[64] My key legal reference throughout the thesis will be to the U.S.A copyright law, due to the origin of the majority of my primary sources. Where relevant, however, references will be made to other legislative systems and an effort will be made to place the debates in an international context.

'words […] "belong" to the individual who "originated" them.'[65] Such thinking as the key doctrinal features of copyright today still resides in and continues being shaped by Romantic aesthetics, influenced by the Lockean model of property and late eighteenth-century theories of personhood that gave rise to the figure of the author as a unique, inspired, individual genius, creating in vacuum.[66] Such categorisation can be problematic; as Anne Barron stresses, copyright takes no interest in the genius

[65] Peter Jaszi and Mart Woodmansee, Introduction to *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 2.

[66] The author understood as such should be understood, Martha Woodmansee explains, as 'the product of the rise in the eighteenth century of a new group of individuals: writers who sought to earn their livelihood from the sale of their writings to the new and rapidly expanding reading public' [Martha Woodmansee, 'The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the 'Author'', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17.4 (1984), 426]. The changing dynamic of the publishing market at the time triggered the need for writers to be able to establish ownership of their writing that took form in copyright law. But the sense of entitlement to be named the owner of a work was in itself new and a manifestation of the characteristic, emergent thinking about creative process. Moving away from the earlier, Renaissance and neoclassical understanding of writing as craft and the writer as 'a vehicle or instrument […] a skilled manipulator of predefined strategies' [Woodmansee, 427], eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thinking about authorship focused on internalised inspiration, i.e. inspiration that was an inherently singular experience, coming not from outside or above, but from within the writer. This is a shift that Foucault also points to in 'What is an Author?' (1969). Locating the emergence of the author in the eighteenth century, Foucault argues that 'the coming into being of the notion of the 'author' constitutes a privileged moment of *individualisation* in the history of ideas.' [Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rubinow (London: Penguin Books, 1984), 101. Hereafter WWA]. In such a context, inspiration 'came to be explicated in terms of original genius, with the consequence that the inspired work was made peculiarly and distinctively the product – and the property – of the writer' [Woodmansee, 427]. The definitions of property that give rise to this paradigm, and the early copyright laws, drew on the Enlightenment notions of individualism, autonomy, and rights, to arrive at a model of exclusionary ownership of an authored work that dominates copyright today. This understanding of authorship as an act of original creation paralleled Locke's view of property and its origin: 'whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes his *Property*' [John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ed. Thomas P. Peardon (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952), 306]. The modern notion of the author, and the paradigms that dominate copyright, reside in this propriety model that associates authorship with an inspired individualism, as an expression of labour that originates with authorial genius. 'Over the history of Anglo-American copyright,' Jaszi explains, 'Romantic "authorship" has served the interests of publishers and other distributors […] it played a [….] role in shaping legal doctrine' [Peter Jaszi, 'The Author Effect: Contemporary Copyright and Collective Creativity' in *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature*, eds. Peter Jaszi and Martha Woodmansee, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 34]. It is important to point out, then, that although modern copyright developed at the time of the rise of professional author as well as of the proliferation of the Romantic thinking about creativity, the law, as Kathy Bowrey puts it, 'was relatively unsympathetic to either of these changes to the writer's social status' [Kathy Bowrey, 'Who is paining copyright history' in *Dear Images: Art, Copyright and Culture,* eds. Daniel McClean and Karsten Schubert, (London and Manchester: Institute of Contemporary Arts and Ridinghouse, 2002), 259]. Rather, early copyright was preoccupied with book trade and the privileges of book publishers. The author in the light of the early copyright emerged, to borrow from Mark Rose, as a proprietor, who would sell the copyright on transfer of the book – the property – to the bookseller [Mark Rose, 'The Author as Proprietor: Donaldson v. Becket and the Genealogy of Modern Authorship', *Representations*, 23 (1998), 51-85].

factor, i.e. imagination, inspiration, ideas, or the aesthetic value of the work. Instead, copyright focuses on their expression. It is the inherent reliance on the singularity and uniqueness of authorship as manifested in the legal anxiety of influence that remains key in determining the conceptual framework of copyright's approach to artistic practice. Formulated as such, however, copyright thinking proves unaccommodating at best and hostile in most cases, when faced with numerous artistic developments that have arisen in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The inadequacy of such a framework to approaching creativity at large, and contemporary creative cultures in particular, reverberates especially vividly when cases such as *Cariou* v. *Prince* emerge, but has been a subject of a continuous debate for a few decades now. As Jaszi and Woodmansee stress, 'with its emphasis on originality and self-declaring creative genius, this notion of authorship has functioned to marginalise or deny the work of many creative people [...] copyright does not extend to works that are not "original",'[67] and originality as conceived of in legal terms immediately excludes practices such as appropriation from copyright protection as derivative, as an act of piracy, defacement or copyright violation. Combined with commercial pressures and the proprietary, economic aspects of the rights to copy, the notion of authorship that emerges when legal considerations of contemporary art are concerned exposes copyright's bias towards works of singular authorship as expressions that unambiguously comply with law's understanding of the distinct art forms that it recognises and protects.[68] Because it is art forms, specific expressions of authorial production, clearly categorised, rather than art and aesthetics more broadly that copyright is set up to protect, expressions of ideas, not ideas themselves. Law assumes clearly defined generic boundaries, 'a work [as] an objectification,'[69] where any aberration from the established categories proves problematic.

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[67] Peter Jaszi and Marta Woodmansee, 'The Ethical Reaches of Authorship', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 95:4 (1996), 947-977.

[68] Act 2.1. of the Berne Convention defines artistic works in the following way: 'The expression "literary and artistic works" shall include every production in the literary, scientific and artistic domain, whatever may be the mode or form of its expression, such as books, pamphlets and other writings; lectures, addresses, sermons and other works of the same nature; dramatic or dramatico-musical works; choreographic works and entertainments in dumb show; musical compositions with or without words; cinematographic works to which are assimilated works expressed by a process analogous to cinematography; works of drawing, painting, architecture, sculpture, engraving and lithography; photographic works to which are assimilated works expressed by a process analogous to photography; works of applied art; illustrations, maps, plans, sketches and three-dimensional works relative to geography, topography, architecture or science.'

[69] Anne Barron, 'Copyright, Art, and Objecthood', in *Dear Images: Art, Copyright and Culture,* eds. Daniel McClean and Karsten Schubert (London and Manchester: Institute of Contemporary Arts and Ridinghouse, 2002), 291.

But the dynamic that governs contemporary appropriation, and conceptual and avant-garde art practices more broadly, resides in an aesthetic logic that relies on a reconceptualisation of the established categories of artistic production. Ideas, rather than their expressions, take centre stage in contemporary art, especially with the emergence of conceptualism (and, as Joseph Kossuth proclaimed, all art (after Duchamp) is conceptual art).[70] While, for example, the 1988 U.S. Copyright Act 'prohibits protection of any idea, procedure, process or discovery,'[71] conceptualism favours ideas over art objects. At the heart of conceptual art practice is the notion of the dematerialisation of the art object, where, as Sol LeWitt proclaimed, ideas themselves become works of art.[72] In such a context, the very idea of authorial execution as the paramount copyright requirement becomes problematic. The assertion also contrasts rather unfavourably with the legal fixation requirement. Key to the proliferation of contemporary art practices, conceptual thinking remains antithetical to copyright thinking; conceptual art's interest in ideas rather than their expression proves an antagonism when viewed from the copyright's point of view, and seems to call for a system that favours creativity over originality.

With the understanding of the ontological status of art work and the artist interrogated particularly radically over the course of the last century, ambiguity turns into an aesthetic dominant of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century arts, a cultural framework that defies copyright thinking. The law's inherent rejection of ambiguity means that the two approaches remain incongruent. Copyright, even when engaging with contemporary art practices, still remains insistent on the same, familiar, categories, reliant on the singular, objectified, fixed expression of an idea. Even if updated and reformulated in response to cultural change, copyright reform primarily affords protection of new forms of expression only, e.g. introducing copyright protection of photographs in 1908. It does not respond to the changing aesthetic attitudes, and as such proves, as Barron observes, incapable of accommodating contemporary visual art, 'for it excludes any art practice that resists its own reification.'[73]

But this disjunction that marks the parallel histories of aesthetic and legal developments, although problematic, limiting and an inevitable constraint on artistic experimentation, can also be conceived of as a vehicle of change, though change

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[70] Joseph Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 164.
[71] U.S. Const. art 17, §102(b).
[72] Sol LeWitt, 'Sentences on Conceptual Art', in *Conceptual Art: a Critical Anthology,* ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 107.
[73] Barron, 291.

approached differently from the presuppositions that U.S. Constitution makes on copyright's role in promoting progress. Seen as such, copyright's inherently deterministic, conservative and inward-looking nature becomes a trigger for subversive art in its attempt to question and oppose the confines of the official discourse and practice. From early twentieth century DADA and Marcel Duchamp's readymades, Tristan Tzara's poems out of the hat, 1960s conceptualism, Fluxus and Oulipo, later developments in appropriation and pop art, through to Neoism and The Situationist International, the history of twentieth-century avant-gardes could be described as a history of subversive takes on creativity, originality, and authorship. Acts of appropriation, and aesthetic experimentation more broadly, inevitably emerge as a result of or a response to particular dominant attitudes towards notions of creativity. As such, direct correlations can be drawn between the emergence of the early twentieth-century avant-gardes and the parallel, unprecedented expansion of copyright globally, all emerging, as Jaszi observed, at the period marked by 'extreme valorization of the individual point of view, associated with both Romanticism and Modernism.'[74] Those developments were exemplified by, among others, the 1908 Berlin revision of the Berne Convention, implementation of the 1909 Copyright Act in the U.S.A., and the 1911 Copyright Act in the U.K.[75] Similarly, the 1961 Rome

[74] Peter Jaszi, 'Is there such thing as postmodern copyright?', *Tulane Journal of Technology and Intellectual Property*, Fall 2009, 108.

[75] The 1908 Berlin revision of the Berne Convention was significant in that it emerged as a response to the rapidly changing cultural landscape and the rise to prominence of new technologies. The 1908 revision recognised photographs, choreography, and works of architecture, as well as recording right for music and cinematographic right, not previously protected by copyright. The United States would not recognise the Berne Convention until 1989. As such, the key developments in copyright in the U.S. were unilateral but, as Paul K. Saint-Amour stresses, of high significance in the international scene. While earlier legislation lay foundations for the U.S. copyright it is the 1909 act that played a particularly important role at the time. 'Of the United States, one can say that on or about July 1, 1909 the character of cultural production changed' [Paul K. Saint-Amour, Introduction to *Modernism and Copyright* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8].The act had a huge impact on the makeup of copyright law, from the scope of protectable works to the definition of authorship itself. While the 1909 act extended the term of copyright protection, it refused to adopt the fifty-year *post mortem auctoris* rule that became a new standard with the 1908 Berlin revision of Berne Convention. The act, like the Berlin revisions, also responded to the rise in new technologies, to introduce a right of mechanical reproduction and a compulsory licence system that allowed production of new recordings of any work after its authorised premiere subject to a payment of royalties. The innovation of the 1909 Act also included the notion of work-for-hire that significantly expanded the legal definition of the author. The introduction of the doctrine moved away from the temporary assignation of copyright to the requirement of its relinquishment to the employer who would become a sole copyright holder; 'the word "author" shall include the employer in the case of works made for hire.' [Act of 4 March 1909, Sec. 62]. Of major significance to the later development of copyright was an introduction of a new right – a right to copy. As a result of the 1909 Act, copyright holders were entitled not just to print, reprint, publish, and vend their works but also to copy them; 'any person entitled thereto, upon complying with the provisions of this Act, shall have the exclusive right: (a) To print, reprint, publish, copy, and vend the copyrighted work' [Act of 4 March 1909]. While, the 1909 Act stressed the independence of U.S. copyright from the

Convention, the 1967 Stockholm revision of the Berne Convention, the 1976 U.S. Copyright Act, and the 1956 Copyright Act in the United Kingdom[76] all emerged at a backdrop of a particular cultural moment. This was a time when Barthes wrote 'The Death of the Author' (1968), Foucault lectured on 'What is an Author*?*' (1969), when 'postmodernism' was being defined on pages of *October* journal, and when those philosophical assertions found their applications in aesthetics and poetics. 'Indeed, the avant-garde – with its processural, appropriative, and collaborative proclivities,' says Stephen Voyce, 'evolves alongside an intellectual property scheme whose reliance on deliberate misinterpretations of authorship experimental writers [and artists] work to challenge.'[77]

Where contrasting legal and aesthetic attitudes towards originality emerge, the notion of authorial intention proves of paramount importance as well. While the 1960s witnessed a clear shift towards anti-intentionalist attitudes to interpretation (with Barthes and Foucault as key thinkers redefining the writer-text-reader relationship),[78] the law remained reliant on establishing a relationship between the

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Berne Convention, the 1911 Act in the U.K. was designed to harmonise with the international treaties. It introduced the fifty-year p.m.a. term of copyright protection and codified fair dealing as non-infringing means of copying for private study, research, criticism, review, or newspaper summary [Copyright Act, 1911, Geo. 5, ch. 46, § 2.1.].

[76] The 1961 Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organisations for the first time extended copyright protection from the author of a work to the producer if the media, i.e. cassettes, records. Similarly to the early twentieth-century developments, the Rome Convention was drawn in response to the technological change and the ubiquity of reproduction and recording technologies such as cassette recorders. The 1967 Stockholm revision of Berne convention addressed issues of broadcasting further, to grant shift the focus of licences from profit-making to the communication to the public. The 1967 revision also introduced the general right to reproduction for the first time. The same preoccupations with changing technologies and the shifting nature of information production, reproduction, and dissemination triggered by the emergence of television, sound recording technology, photocopiers, and radio dictated the expansion of U.S. and U.K. copyright in 1976 and 1956 respectively.

[77] Stephen Voyce, 'Toward an Open Source Poetics: Appropriation, Collaboration and the Commons', *Criticism* 53.3 (2011), 409.

[78] The question of authorial intention has been a source of one of the dominant debates in textual studies throughout the twentieth century. The so-called intentionalist approaches to authorship grow out of and continue the Romantic tradition of authorial individualism, where the author and author's intention are key to interpreting and understanding a text. Echoes of this approach reverberate in M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953) but it was most explicitly and famously explored in E.D. Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* (1967). Hirsch argues that the author's intention should be seen as the ultimate determiner of meaning, as 'the meaning is an affair of consciousness of words [...] to banish the original author as the determiner of meaning was to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation' [E.D. Hirsch, Jr., 'In Defence of the Author', in *Intention and Interpretation*, ed. Gary Iseminger (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1995), 13-14]. Non-intentionalist thinking about paradigms of authorship founds its most explicit manifestations in postmodernism. However, a move away from the author as the sole source of meaning is clear in early twentieth-century thought as well, and has been of interest to T.S. Eliot in his 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919). For Eliot, 'no poet, no artist of any art work has his complete meaning alone.' [Eliot, 'Tradition', 38]. This is a stance at the core of New Critical thinking, echoed most overtly in W.K. Wimsatt and

authorial intention to create a 'work' and the work itself, still prominent today. The notion surfaces particularly explicitly in the context of fair use cases, such as *Cariou* v. *Prince*. In determining whether an application of a copyrighted work can be classed as fair use, its transformative nature is taken into consideration. To be classed as transformative, the 'derivative' work has to engage with the appropriated text via commentary or criticism. It has to add new forms of expression or new meanings and insights to an appropriated source. Seen as such, a work of appropriation art can be considered original only as an expression of an act ascribed to an individual author whose intention is to engage in active critique of the source. And although, as Batts's summary judgement reads, 'the requisite level of creativity is extremely low [...] The vast majority of works make the grade quite easily, as they possess some creative spark, "no matter how crude, humble or obvious" it might be,'[79] Prince's *Canal Zone* did not make the mark. Even when considered under the fair use doctrine, Prince's work was deemed not original enough, not (obviously and crudely?) transformative to warrant a status of a legitimate expression of authorship. While fair use aims to establish a more accommodating model of copyright, one that expands the scope of copyright protection to allow for (limited) unauthorised use of copyrighted material, the provisions are nevertheless heavily rooted in the now inadequate notions of authorship and originality, and severely limited as such.[80] Within this framework authorial intention, so eagerly rejected in arts and literature since Barthes and Foucault, remains significant, as Prince's 2011 testimony and subsequent reasoning behind the 2013 Courts of Appeal verdict both prove. According to the summary judgement:

Monroe C. Beardsley's 'The Intentional Fallacy' (1946). As Wimsatt and Beardsley argue, the 'design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literature [...] judging a poem is like judging a pudding or a machine. We demand that it works [...] a poems should not mean but be' [W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review*, 54.3 (1946), 469]. In its move away from the author as the source of meaning of a text, Wimsatt and Beardsley rejected the kind of Romantic thinking about creativity that still dominates copyright today. What the anti-intentionalist stance favours is a sense of an autonomy of a text. 'The poem is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it' [Wimsatt and Beardsely, 470]. It is this detachment of a text from its origin that becomes problematic for copyright. While the notion of anti-intentialism should not be seen as synonymous with 'the death of the author', Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' (1968) is one possible manifestation of the anti-intentionalist thinking. Strong commitment to anti-intentionalism and a move away from the author as a tenet of meaning is characteristic for post-structuralist and postmodern projects and finds its most explicit manifestation in the works of Derrida and Foucault. The paradigms of authorship associated with the postmodern take will be discussed later in this thesis, as a means of contextualising the contemporary debates.

[79] *Cariou* v. *Prince*, 784.

[80] Fair use is defined in the U.S. Constitution (17 usc § 107) as 'use of a copyrighted work [...] for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research.' Fair use is not an infringement of copyright.

> Prince testified he had no interest in the original meaning of the photographs he uses [...] that he doesn't really have a message he attempts to communicate when making art [...] In creating the paintings, Prince did not intend to comment on any aspect of the original works or on the broader culture. Prince's intent in creating the Canal Zone paintings was to pay homage or tribute to other painters, including Picasso, Cezanne, Warhol and de Kooning and to create beautiful artworks which related to musical themes and to a post-apocalyptic screenplay he was writing which features a reggae band.[81]

Prince's stance inevitably conflicts with the founding assumptions of copyright; the violation of the fair use doctrine seems to reside here not in the potential misuse of the copyrighted material itself but in the authorial intention, or rather lack thereof, to appropriate in line with the recognised standards. For Batts,

> it is apparent that Prince did not intend to comment on Cariou, on Cariou's Photos, or on aspects of popular culture closely associate with Cariou or the Photos when he appropriated the Photos, and Prince's own testimony shows that his intent was not transformative within the meaning of Section 107 [...] there is vanishingly little, if any, transformative element [...] the transformative content of Prince's paintings is minimal at best.[82]

Rejecting Batts's reasoning, the verdict of the 2013 Court of Appeals centres around an interrogation of the intentionalist rhetoric in the 2011 decision, to shift interest from an author to a work itself:

> the fact that Prince did not provide those sorts of explanations in his deposition [...] is not dispositive. What is critical is how the work in question appears to the reasonable observer, not simply what an artist might say about a particular piece or body of work. Prince's work could be transformative even without commenting on Cariou's work or on culture, and even without Prince's stated intention to do so. Rather than confining our inquiry to Prince's explanations of his artworks, we instead examine how the artworks may "reasonably be perceived" in order to assess their transformative nature.[83]

The Second Circuit take on Prince's practice opens space for a broader, more flexible treatment of the notion of transformative use by recognising the impossibility and futility of attempting to establish, and subsequently to rely on, 'the highly manipulable question' of authorial intentions.[84]

The 2013 verdict of the Court of Appeals is important and has been cited as contributing significantly to a doctrinal shift and the development of a new paradigm in approaches to fair use, foregrounding, as Gilden and Greene stress, 'the

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[81] *Cariou* v. *Prince*, 784.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *Cariou* v. *Prince*, 714 F. 3d 694 (2013).
[84] Andrew Gilden and Timothy Greene, 'Fair Use for the Rich and Fabulous', *Chicago Law Review Dialogue*, 80.88 (2013), 96.

malleability of originality and authorship rhetoric within copyright law' and 'a welcome shift in the purely author-focused jurisprudence that precedes it.'[85] This departure from the reliance on authorial intention as a determining factor in copyright also carries an underlying interrogation of the fixation requirement and the characteristic form-idea dichotomy that dominates copyright. The potential to question the notion of exclusive copyrightability of the expression of an idea that this shift brings about enables legitimisation of not just appropriation art but of avant-gardes more broadly.

Whether legitimisation is an advantage to conceptual and appropriation art is a separate, though important question. The avant-garde, by definition, positions itself in opposition to the mainstream, on the margins of the established culture and the establishment driving it forward, counter to the institution and hence as an institutional critique. As such, the legal category of originality seems antithetical to avant-garde thinking. Originality as a legal notion is applied by judicial as well as art institutions as a tool for identifying and evaluating art. But if institutional critique – and hence a critique of methods and criteria of evaluating art – resides at the core of avant-garde practices, then the avant-garde project, by implication, has to emerge outside of the framework of institutional thinking about art, in opposition to the legal paradigms of originality and, perhaps, instead as an attempt at altering their established criteria. The avant-garde is only possible because of this condition of possibility and the state of indeterminacy that drives the avant-garde project. Appropriation's subversive power to interrogate – its avant-garde status – relies on the preservation of this disparity between cultural and legal categories of creativity. While, to quote Seth Siegelaub, 'any form of art which becomes established becomes establishment,'[86] avant-garde can only subvert if and when the legal and cultural institutions reject it as unlawful. The legitimisation of the practices, then, might not necessarily prove such a happy development from the point of view of aesthetics. What will become of the avant-garde and its potential to subvert, critique and question if the avant-garde practice is approved, embraced and, subsequently, regulated by the law? Regardless of the aesthetic status, however, the shifting legal attitudes towards practices such as appropriation mark an acknowledgement of

[85] Ibid, 98, 100.
[86] Seth Siegelaub, an interview by Ursula Mayer, in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of an Art Object from 1966 to 1972,* ed. Lucy R. Lippard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 126.

significant changes in a broader cultural landscape, to recognise the prolonged impact of the subversive art practice on the aesthetic attitudes today.[87]

1.2. POSTPRODUCTION CONDITION: A TURN TOWARDS ITERATION

These attempts at refocusing the interpretation of fair use principles in the context of appropriation art, from creator to audience and from intent to interpretation, reverberate with echoes of a similar shift from the Romantic conceptions of authorship to the poststructuralist, reader-oriented debates and the internationalist/non-internationalist struggles that dominated the creative arts scene already five decades ago. As such, this shift towards audience-focused inquiry into fair use cases implies a copyright transition now gradually entering the realm of postmodern condition of the death of the author. But while the law seems gradually to embrace the postmodern philosophy and aesthetics, the realm of aesthetics today has taken yet another turn, from the 1980s simulacral, exhausted culture of the postmodern hyper-capitalist dystopia to the digital, 'cut and paste,' remix culture in the era of postproduction. Coined by Nicolas Bourriaud as a term indicative of the current cultural moment that follows on from modernism and postmodernism, postproduction emerges as a cultural condition defined by a contemporary environment of excess that encourages novel approaches to creativity. For Bourriaud, postproduction epitomises the contemporary, and offers a means of presenting 'an analysis of today's art in relation to social changes, whether technological, economic, or sociological.' [88] But this contemporary culture of surplus derives from and manifests itself through an excessive information production, dissemination and manipulation characteristic for the contemporary digital culture and not the excessive consumerism of postmodern hyper-capitalism that triggered appropriation aesthetics as it developed in the 1980s. This characteristic approach exemplifies, I suggest, the changing nature of appropriation as the mode developed from the 1980s to its manifestations today, where the aesthetic transformation is driven by a move away

[87] Considered within such a framework, Prince is hardly a marginalised, independent avant-gardist. His celebrity status, numerous solo exhibitions in leading art galleries and museums, as well as lucrative sales of his work position him firmly among the highly privileged bourgeois of the visual arts world. However, his practice itself, with its explicit echoes of the anti-establishment sympathies, the creative methods applied, and the way these reverberate with the normative discourse of law, make Prince's case a particularly fitting springboard for discussing avant-garde gestures in the copyright context. Appropriation, even in its high-society manifestations, still enjoys a status of an ever problematic anti-establishment cultural rebel and is definitely viewed as such by the copyright legislation.
[88] PCAS, 8.

from the overload of things to information overload as a defining features of creativity.

The contemporary copy-paste culture that Bourriaud poses as a pre-condition of the postproduction moment inherently subsumes self-conscious acts of appropriation as the dominant creative mode of today. 'It is no longer a matter of elaborating a form on the basis of a raw material,' Bourriaud writes, 'but working with objects that are already in circulation on the cultural market, which is to say, objects already *informed* by other objects. Notions of originality [...] and even creation [...] are slowly blurred in this new cultural landscape.'[89] The negotiation of consumption-production dynamic implied in Bourriaud's statement lies at the core of his postproduction thinking. His postproduction Web is an environment synonymous with what Christopher Schmidt describes as a 'waste media capitalism,' [90] an environment characterised by an abundance of language as an object of widespread, constant consumption and production online. It is driven by the excess of information, spam dominance, by digital trash discarded even before it is utilised (but in this cultural landscape it is also possible to compose poetry out of spam).[91] But, today, 'the overproduction is no longer seen as a problem, but as a cultural ecosystem.'[92] However, the nature of the material consumed and produced online alters the nature of this capitalism. In the digital context, technologies come to be defined in terms of processes of reproduction rather than production. Within a culture of information consumerism, governed by what Goldsmith defines as 're-gestures,' [93] i.e. reblogging, retweeting, the nature of information circulation and processing presupposes a 'scrambling of boundaries of consumption and production.' [94] This is a culture that, as Bourriaud stresses, 'denies the binary opposition between the proposal of the transmitter and the participation of the receiver [...] the producer is only a transmitter for the following producer.'[95] As such, any act of consumption simultaneously turns into an act of production, eradicating,

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[89] PCAS, 7.
[90] Christopher Schmidt, 'The Waste Management Poetics of Kenneth Goldsmith', *SubStance*, 37.2 (2008), 37.
[91] I am referring here to the so-called spam poetry, spoetry, texts composed by appropriating subject lines of spam emails. Spoetry differs from the Spam Lit, a movement committed to making spam literary. Texts associated with Spam Lit are composed out of snippets of text available in the public domain and sent out as spam emails. The public domain sources are used to make attribution difficult.
[92] PCAS, 39.
[93] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'The Bounce and the Roll', *Harriet: a poetry blog*, 16 April 2011, accessed, 10 February 2013, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/the-bounce-and-the-roll/.
[94] PCAS, 19.
[95] Ibid, 40.

to turn to Bourriaud again, 'the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work.'[96]

What transpires, then, is a notion of creativity that turns copying into a creative paradigm. But copying in the postproduction environment assumes a hyperbolised structure of reproduction; 'everything digital is a copy,'[97] Carolyn Guertin contends. Driven by models of digital re-creation, postproduction is characterised by proliferation of copies of copies, copies without originals. Mark Poster points to a similar feature of digital information production. For Poster, an act of digital mediation can only produce reproductions, not copies of originals but rather copies as simulacra, i.e. copies that have no originals.[98] A characteristic propensity for the fake is implied in this understanding of the virtual culture and, as Marie-Laure Ryan points out, the term 'virtual' itself encompasses two distinct concepts: 'the largely negative idea of a fake, illusionary, non-existent, and the overwhelmingly positive idea of the potential, which connotes productivity, openness, and diversity.'[99] As Ryan explains (quoting Pierre Lévy), 'the virtual is not at all the opposite of the real. It is, on the contrary, a powerful productive mode of being, a mode that gives free rein to creative process.'[100] Hence, the derogative culture of copying turns into what could be described as a poetics of plagiarism, a different kind of creativity, distinct from what we traditionally understand by the term, flaunting the convention and speculating about the potential of the fluidity and the openness of the source. Here, the new text remains at the same time a deconstructed, displaced old text in a new context, linking, to repeat after Derrida, repetition to alterity.[101] In such a cultural frame iteration becomes a cornerstone of creativity.

This preoccupation with creative possibilities inscribed into acts of reusing material is, of course, as Bourriaud himself admits, 'nothing new.'[102] The affinities of the postmodern and postproduction practices are significant. The task of the early twenty-first century is in the end, as Bourriaud stresses, 'not to start from zero or find oneself encumbered by the store-house of history, but to inventory and select, to use

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[96] Ibid, 13.
[97] Carolyn Guertin, *Digital Prohibition: Piracy and Authorship in New Media Art* (London: Continuum, 2012), 21.
[98] Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 9.
[99] Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Cyberspace, Virtuality, and the Text,' in *Cybertext Textuality*: *Computer Technology and Literary Theory,* ed. Marie-Laure Ryan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 89.
[100] Pierre Lévy, quoted in Ryan, 'Cyberspace', 90.
[101] Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in *Limited, Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, ed. Gerald Graff (Evanson, Il: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7. Hereafter SEC.
[102] PCAS, 8.

and download.'[103] As such, the contemporary digital impulse brings forward new concerns; similar forms, similar approaches to uncreative practice, already explored at different stages of the twentieth century, arise in the culture of postproduction through an engagement with and in response to the new digital hegemony, to address a different range of questions, distinct from the preoccupations of the postmodern predecessors; 'if the downloading of forms (these samplings and remakes) represents important concerns today, it is because these forms urge us to consider global culture as a toolbox [...]. Instead of prostrating ourselves before works of the past, we can use them.'[104]

A sense of a repetition of a system of thought and aesthetics that is implied in such an understanding of postproduction turns the notion into a self-consciously iterative concept, a particularly fitting framework for defining what I see as a shift towards iteration in creative thinking today. What distinguishes Bourriaud's understanding of the culture of the copy from the earlier related debates is a very clear cultural context and its affinities with contemporary reproduction technologies. This assumption is implied in the term itself. Postproduction is a technical expression used in television, film, and video. It refers, as Bourriaud explains, to processes applied to recorded material, after it has been produced, e.g. montage as an inclusion of other visual or audio sources, subtitling, voice-overs, and special effects. 'As a set of activities linked to the service industry and recycling, postproduction belongs to the tertiary sector, as opposed to the industrial or agricultural sector, i.e., the production of raw materials.'[105] Implied here are clear affinities between processes of repetition and technologies that enable them, where the possibility of recycling, of iteration, is contingent on the technological context. This contingency informs the notion of postproduction and points to the meaning of the prefix 'post' itself – 'post' meaning after the act of primary production.[106]

This interest in technologies as a characteristic feature of postproduction thinking offers a conceptual framework for discussing developments of authorship and originality through association of aesthetic and legal developments of the concepts with technological change. A wide range of phenomena that contributed to defining the so-called remix culture emerged over the past two decades. Sampling in

[103] Ibid, 93.
[104] PCAS, 95.
[105] Ibid, 13.
[106] Bourriaud is primarily interested in such a meaning of 'post' in postproduction. But the very clearly defined cultural context of postproduction points to another possible understanding of the notion – 'post' meaning historically after the moment of industrial production of modernism and after the excessive production that defined the hyper-consumerist moment of postmodernism.

popular music and the rise in popularity of music file sharing led to battles on a cultural, theoretical, economic and legal levels. For instance, the closing of Napster, a peer-to-peer music sharing service, following a copyright lawsuit in 2001, saw a parallel rise to prominence of creative commons agreements, open source software and related Free Culture discourse as propagated by Laurence Lessig and Richard Stallman.[107] The arrival of digital photography, video and e-books as well as related modes of copying and dissemination of all of the above, alongside the significant rise of new media and social networking platforms that often rely on generating content by copying, pasting, and linking to existing content, has created a culture where 'ctrl+C' and 'ctrl+V' emerge as not only commonplace but in fact preferred modes of textual production. Generating Twitter content and securing an active, expansive follower base does not require an ability to produce new text but to instead, select, curate and share in 140 characters, according to recognised conventions. This approach is significant in that it contributes to a novel understanding of both what it means to author a text and of what we understand as a text (and with MLA, APA, and Chicago all recently formulating standards for bibliographic citations of Tweets, Twitter seems to have gained a status of an officially legitimised, approved textual source).

Such legitimisation of particular creative techniques, and the resulting shifts in the status of an author can, historically, be attributed to technological change. Elizabeth Eisenstein draws links between the rise of a figure of a professional artist

[107] Ideas of free software were originated by Richard Stallman in his GNU Project to establish a paradigm of sharing for software writers and users. The GNU Operating System Software is available for everyone to modify and distribute, but, Stallman explains, 'no distributor will be allowed to restrict its further distribution. That is to say, proprietary modifications will not be allowed. I want to make sure that all versions remain free' [Richard Stallman, 'The GNU Manifesto', *GNU Operating System*, accessed 12 September 2014, http://www.gnu.org/gnu/manifesto.html]. Although the non-commercial aspects of Stallman's project are related to its principles, it is the understanding of liberty that comes with a freedom to use, reuse and modify the source that is of the essence: 'Free Software means that the software users have freedom. (The issue is not about price)' [Richard Stallman, 'Philosophy of GNU Project', *GNU Operating System*, accessed 12 September 2014, http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/philosophy.html]. Stallman's thinking resides in a recognition that 'there is no intrinsic right to intellectual property [...] all intellectual property rights are just licences granted by society' [Stallman, 'The Manifesto']. As Stallman stresses, the ease of copying in the digital environment should be used as a creative possibility. But as the models of copying change in relation to book publishing environments, so should the related models of licensing change, to reflect the altered paradigms of cultural production. Lawrence Lessig's Free Culture movement and Creative Commons Licences it propagates build on and develop Stallman's philosophy. Although even the most progressive creative commons licences are still limited by and contingent on copyright frameworks, focusing on protection of fixed expressions rather than processes, they nevertheless allow more flexibility in construction of authorship. [Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 7].

and the development of the printing press;[108] Eva Hemmungs-Wirten points to the rise of photocopying technologies in the 1970 as a paradigmatic shift in understanding of means of reproduction, and, as a result, notions of authorship; [109] futurism developed as a reaction to increased mechanisation in the early twentieth century and, similarly, contemporary notions of creativity need to be considered through the lens of the contemporary increasingly digitised culture. Today, Fitterman and Place argue, 'production (industrial age) [becomes] replaced by simulation (information age).' [110] The trajectory that emerges precludes a particular relationship between technology and creativity where advancements in reproduction technologies inevitably result in association of creativity with acts of copying. As modes of information, (re)production and dissemination become more advanced and necessary technologies more accessible, notions of creativity and copying gradually converge to eventually emerge as interchangeable terms. As Benjamin predicted, in the age of post-mechanical reproduction the work of art becomes 'designed for reproducibility'[111] rather than for the aura of its manifest singularity. This is not to say that a propensity for originality is abandoned when increasingly more advanced technologies emerge; rather, the attitudes to originality alter as technologies develop. The change brought about by the contemporary technological shift, increasingly blurring boundaries between copyright infringement and originality, emerges as a particularly fraught issue from the point of view of copyright. The technological changes always triggered aesthetic shifts, with copyright law adapting as a result. As Lessig puts it, 'the law would reach as far as the technology for "copying" would reach.' [112] But, Bowrey observes, 'whilst copyright expanded to incorporate new productive technologies and protect the copyright in the works produced by these means, there was not necessarily an associated rise in respect for the new skills and artistic practices related to technological "progress."'[113]

'Where we are now, in a postproduction period, is beyond what we call "art of appropriation", which naturally infers an ideology of ownership, and moving towards a culture [...] of the constant activity of signs based on a collective ideal: sharing.'[114]

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[108] Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as the Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
[109] Eva Hemmungs-Wirtén, *No Trespassing: Authorship, Intellectual Property Rights, and the Boundaries of Globalization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).
[110] Robert Fitterman and Vanessa Place, *Notes on Conceptualism* (New York: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2009), 32.
[111] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), 219. Hereafter TWOA.
[112] Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 269.
[113] Bowrey, 266.
[114] PCAS, 9.

And although, contrary to Bourriaud's proclamation, issues of ownership still remain at the forefront of contemporary debates on authorship, creativity and originality, the affirmation of the cultural shift from postmodern to postproduction culture is significant. Within such a framework the nature and status of ownership of intellectual properties become increasingly more ambiguous. When the Internet is the source – the ever-changing, constantly edited, inherently fluid virtual grab-bag of sources and resources – both the nature of the appropriated material and categories that define the practice itself change. The fluid, digital environment unsettles the familiar categories of creative production to, as a result, foreground their malleability. The postmodernism-postproduction distinction is, however, one that legal scholarship does not make in order to, instead, rather tenuously, uncritically and superficially, label all 'derivative' art practices as postmodern, without much investment in postmodern aesthetic and philosophical preoccupations. But the postmodernism-postproduction dichotomy, and the trajectory that marks the development of appropriation art from the 1980s to the present, is important here and key to defining the attitudes towards practices similar to Prince's in experimental arts, as they are proliferating at present. Read in that context, the 2013 Richard Prince verdict is also crucial in that it is indicative of changing legal thinking triggered by the contemporary technological shift. A postmodernist, to paraphrase Deborah Halbert, when brought to court, would inevitably lose.[115] Today, as Richard Prince's case proves, a postproduction artist stands a chance of a more sympathetic treatment.

1.3. The essence of technology at the Iterative Turn

Reading contemporary reproduction strategies in their current technological moment, Bourriaud's is an attempt at identifying a broader cultural tendency that emerges under a unique, contemporary cultural condition, an attitude that I see manifested in the emergence of the Iterative turn as defined in this thesis. As Bourriaud explains, 'today certain elements and principles are reemerging as themes and are suddenly at the forefront, to the point of constituting the "engine" of new aesthetic practice.'[116] The same sense of contemporary culture that relies on iterative gestures evoked in Home's trajectory manifests itself clearly in Bourriaud's postproduction thinking. The aesthetic paradigms of both Home's plagiarist culture and Bourraiud's postproduction condition presuppose a dominance of inherently derivative practices, relying on the repurposing and recycling of the abundance of

[115] Halbert, 116.
[116] PCAS, 9.

available material proliferating and constantly generated online, a dynamic that influences habits of cultural production and consumption also outside of the immediate confines of the Web and strictly technology-oriented contexts.

This is a key assumption, indicative of a particular thinking about technology that informs the dynamic of the Iterative turn. If contemporary reading and writing habits develop as a result of the ubiquity of digital environments that transform and influence our behaviours also outside of the digital sphere, then acts of creativity today can be conceived of as a manifestation of the Heideggerian 'essence of technology' and not of the technology itself. This is a distinction which informs Heidegger's inquiry in 'The Question Concerning Technology' – not a question of technology per se, but of what Heidegger refers to as *Wesen*, the essence of technology: 'by no means anything technological.' [117] 'Technology,' Heidegger explains, 'is not equivalent to the essence of technology [...] the essence of a thing is considered to be *what* the thing is.'[118] In line with Heidegger's thinking, it is the changing understanding of the very conception of technology, of what technology is, rather than simply of the changes in the apparatus of technology that should be seen as a trigger for a shift in aesthetic attitudes in their respective cultural moments. As Žižek puts it, the 'essence of technology' does not designate a complex network of machines and activities; rather it is a manifestation of a particular attitude towards reality; 'technology,' Žižek comments, 'is the way reality discloses itself to us in contemporary times.' [119] Today, then, we operate by means of Heideggerian essence of technology, which, as a dominant attitude, 'structures the way we relate to reality.'[120]

The problem for Heidegger is not the existence of technology – or its manifestation in a variety of forms it assumes – but rather a propensity for and orientation towards technology and technological thinking, a certain technological imagination that finds its manifestations in an aesthetic project. The framework within which contemporary iterative practices are best considered, I suggest, should be based on this concept of technology as an essence rather than simply viewed as a response to changes in technology themselves. Of course, the technological developments and thinking about technology that Heidegger posits are inherently interdependent. It is impossible to speak of the essence of technology without

[117] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 4. Hereafter QCT.
[118] Ibid, 3.
[119] Slavoy Žižek, *Event: Philosophy in Transit* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 31.
[120] Ibid, 31.

considering technology in instrumental terms, while any manifestation of technological progress is contingent on the conceptualisation of the essence of technology:

> because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. [121]

'Such a realm,' Heidegger suggests, 'is art.'[122] In order to think about creativity in the contemporary postproduction moment, a model of technological thinking is required that goes beyond the restricted definitions of technology viewed in purely instrumental terms. The notion of the essence of technology invites a broader, more adaptable and comprehensive approach to conceptualising the nature and role of technology today. Technology as essence cannot be defined as a specific machine or a tool, but rather should be seen as a more general concept of making, inclusive of processes of artistic production. As Heidegger puts it,

> if we speak of the 'essence of a house' and the 'essence of a state,' we do not mean a generic type; rather we mean the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop and decay – the way in which they 'essence' [*Wesen*].[123]

If we speak of an essence of digital technology, it is not the specific applications, devices, or Internet browsers that we address, but a broader attitude towards the ways in which we engage with the means of information production and dissemination in an environment in which all of these technologies influence creative practices.

This is a trajectory that has its roots in what can be described as Heidegger's taxonomy of technology. Heidegger draws a distinction between modern technology and its traditional equivalent. While, for Heidegger, the modern technology restricts the definition of the technological to that which is purely instrumental, the traditional technology, or *technē*, typically encompasses manifestations of skill, art, or craft. *Technē* is a category used to denote both the creative and the instrumental practice; it is, Heidegger writes, 'the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to [...] *poiēsis*; it is something poietic.'[124] It is in the affinities between *technē* and technology that the nature of the essence of technology resides. *Technē* is both technology and *poiēsis*, *technē* as a technique perhaps, where technology assumes a sense of a method of the arts, turning itself into an aesthetic tool**.** The function of technology conceptualised

[121] QCT, 35.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid, 30.
[124] Ibid, 13.

in such terms can perhaps be more accurately described as the 'technology-function,' analogous to Foucault's notion of the 'author-function.' While the 'author-function' 'does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects – positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals,'[125] the 'technology-function' can serve as a matter of certain orientation towards technology as a wide-ranging cultural attitude. It involves an extensive engagement with processes of making and producing and is not a manifestation of a singular machine or tool.

What is of particular significance to my argument here is the possibility afforded by thinking about technology as essence to explore the dynamic of alterity, subversion, and change, the dynamic of the Iterative turn. *Technē*, unlike modern technology, is inherently non-instrumental; the essence of technology is a matter of constant change. As Heidegger argues, the world is set in place (*gestellt*), and the modern technology as a tool and a means to an end, is what Heidegger describes as an Enframing (*Gestell*). While Enframing is characterised by an attempt at regulating, securing, using technology as a means of setting in place, the emphasis of *technē* is on engaging with technology in non-instrumental terms, on unsecuring and unsettling the familiar categories and paradigms. The use of technology that informs contemporary aesthetic practice described in this thesis should be seen as the essence of *technē* rather than of technology per se. The engagement with technology that informs iterative writing practices can be considered as a response to an ever-increasing technological move towards Enframing, a response to an effort to regulate the arts, to secure the *technē* in purely instrumental terms. The aesthetic premise of iterative creative acts resides, I suggest, in the possibilities of thinking about technology and creativity as *technē*, where creative process emerges as a result of unsecuring and unsettling the familiar, dominant categories. While Heidegger sees Enframing as the essence of modern technology, I suggest that turning towards *technē*, with allowances for digital thinking, offers a more accurate framework for the contemporary context. As such, the creative thinking at the contemporary postproduction moment should be seen as governed by the essence of technology (*Wessen*) rather that by its Enframing (*Gestell*). In this approach, any act of digital reproducibility, assumes an aesthetic rather than instrumental function. It becomes an end in itself, governed by its own logic of iterative aesthetics rather than by the rules of technodeterministic pragmatism. The iterative aesthetic, with its subversive take on mechanisms of technology, becomes a space where the possibilities of *technē* as a creative paradigm are recognised and realised. The approach to creativity,

[125] WWA, 113.

similarly to Heideggerian essence of technology, can be read, to borrow from Samuel Weber, as an unsettling process, a movement not towards Enframing the world, setting it in place, but towards dismantling or unsecuring it.[126]

Such understanding of the essence of technology as a flexible and fluid category, as a cultural state that is coming to presence,[127] is inscribed into my notion of the Iterative turn. Thinking about the contemporary change in technology emerging in the postproduction moment as 'a turn' allows for an acknowledgement of a certain sense of continuity in thinking about practices of appropriation in the variety of their historical guises, always informed by the essence of technology, and changing as a result of shifting conceptions of technology in their respective cultural moments. A turn does not imply a break away from the older models of technology or creative practice – Home's plagiarism, for example, develops from rather than rejects the postmodern and modernist projects – but as an unsettling process that has generative qualities at the same time, as a Heideggerian 'turning.' Heidegger speaks of a turning as that which comes to pass within Enframing. As Heidegger writes, 'if a change in Being – i.e., now, in the coming to presence of Enframing – comes to pass, than this in no way means that technology [...] will be done away with.'[128] A change in the coming to presence of a new aesthetic paradigm in no way means that earlier creative models will be done away with. Rather, the coming to presence of a new conception of technology is characteristically driven by what Heidegger describes as the 'change of its destining.'[129] The change, as a turn, or turning, manifests itself 'out of the arrival of another destining.'[130] A change in the Enframing, in the technological apparatus, a development of new technological possibilities, i.e. the ubiquity of the digital tools and methods, results in a turning not just in the technology itself, but in the essence of technology, in its conception and the attitudes towards an altered technological reality that emerge as a result. In the turning, as Heidegger commented on a shift in his own philosophy, 'everything is reversed,' but nevertheless it is 'not a change of standpoint.'[131] Rather, it is a change conceived of as a turning point[132] that

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[126] Samuel Weber, 'Theatre, Technics and Writing', *1-800,* 1 (1989), 20, n. 8.
[127] In his translation of QCT William Lovitt renders the noun *Wesen* as both 'essence' and 'coming to presence,' with the latter translation of particular prominence in Heidegger's essay, 'The Turning.' See: Marin Heidegger, 'The Turning', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977), 35, n. 1. Hereafter T.
[128] Ibid, 38.
[129] Ibid, 39.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings,* trans. F. A Capuzzi and J. Glenn Gray, ed. D. F. Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 231-32.
[132] My description of change as a turning point is a reference to Heidegger's statement in his letter to William J. Richardson which, in the German original, reads: 'Das Denken der Kehre ist eine Wendung in meinem Denken.' The notion of 'die Kehre' mentioned here has been

allows for a shift in established paradigms in response to the change in the conception of technology. The turning, then, emerges from a pattern of discontinuities with what comes before it – appropriating in postproduction moment differs from the related modernist and postmodern acts – but the conception of technology and the related aesthetics that emerge as a result of the turning are interpretable from within and through a relationship to earlier projects and concerns.

Hence, what is manifested in the contemporary postproduction turn towards digital technology and iteration is a transformation in the attitudes towards forms of knowing (and *technē*, as Heidegger explained, is linked with the word *epistēmē* – 'both words are names for knowing in the widest sense').[133] 'Such knowing,' Heidegger suggests, 'provides an opening up. As an opening up it is revealing,'[134] indicative of epistemologies of contemporary aesthetics, revealing shifting paradigms of creative thinking and alternative approaches to originality that emerge at the backdrop of such a conceptual framework. For Heidegger, technology is a way of revealing (*das Entreben*) of that which it brings forth, i.e. letting a thing disclose itself rather than simply producing or manufacturing an object in purely instrumental terms. 'What is instrumental in *technē*,' Heidegger writes, 'does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing that *technē* is bringing forth.[135] Creative acts such as Prince's, overtly reliant on repurposed material, are a manifestation of such an assumption, openly disclosing themselves, their methods and sources to draw attention to their distinctive aesthetics, to alternative models of thinking about creativity today. It is not the manipulation of sources, making by means of remaking, that is at the core of iterative creative work, but rather the revealing of the making as remaking. Conceptualised as such, works such as Prince's, or texts later described in this thesis, should not be considered instances of plagiarism or copyright infringement but are better described, I suggest, as iterative acts and a manifestation of the contemporary Iterative turn. Iteration as it manifests itself at the postproduction moment can be seen as an expression of what Bourriaud describes as

varyingly translated as 'a turn,' 'a turning,' or 'a reversal,' and the statement itself has been translated with references to a 'turning point' and 'change.' William J. Richardson translates the statement as: 'The thinking of the reversal *is* a change in my thought' [reprinted as Martin Heidegger, Preface to *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, William J. Richardson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), xviii]. In contrast, Emad Parvis's translation reads: 'The thinking of the turning is a turning point in my thinking' [Emad Parvis, *On the Way to Heidegger's Contribution to Philosophy* (Maddison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 111]. See note 41, p. 214 on Parvis's comment on his translation.

[133] QCT, 5.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ibid, 6.

a 'configuration of knowledge, which is characterised by the invention of paths through culture.'[136] Here Heideggerian thinking and Bourriaud project converge to form a notion of an Iterative turn that is indicative of shifting aesthetic attitudes and emergent means of conceptualising them.

An extension rather than a synonym of copying and appropriating, I see the notion of iteration as a broad and flexible concept akin to, or perhaps itself a manifestation of, the Heideggerian essence, an essence of making by means of transgressing the familiar notion of authorship and creativity that turns into a creative act, one that is revealing of the paradigms of creativity constructed by iterative means. My understanding of the notion is based on Derrida's concept of iterability as defined in *Signature, Event, Context* (1988). The word 'iter' means 'again.' The logic of iterability is the logic of repetition. But iterability also inheres change. As Derrida explains, the term 'iter' most likely derives from 'itra,' or 'other' in Sanscrit. Hence, 'everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity.'[137] Repetition is that which, for Derrida, alters. The principle of iterability assumes alterity as a condition of otherness, difference or change. Iterability implies a repetition, but a repetition with a *différance* rather than a repetition of the same. As such, iterability emerges as a category particularly relevant to describing the dynamic of technological and aesthetic turns, where a change, a shift in tools, practices, and attitudes, involves both a move away from the earlier paradigms and a repetition of the earlier paradigms at the same time.[138] Hence, each turn, regardless of the cultural condition that defines it, is always an iterative

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[136] PCAS, 19.

[137] SEC, 7.

[138] The same iterative logic is implied in my conflation of Heidegger's and Derrida's terms and the relationship between Heidegger's and Derrida's thought. Derrida's could be described as an iteration of Heidegger's philosophy, as its altered repetition. This association with Heidegger is one that Derrida makes explicit himself [see Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 52, 54]. The affinity is also manifested in Derrida's understanding of the notion of writing *sous rature* as an appropriation of Heidegger's crossed out 'Being' in his *The Question of Being*, that informs my thinking about erasure poetry as writing under erasure discussed in Chapter 2. Derrida's wider philosophical project is, in fact, an iterative one. It is governed by what Spivak describes as 'the notion of the joyful yet laborious strategy of rewriting the old language [...] Derrida acknowledges that the desire of deconstruction may itself become a desire to reappropriate the text actively through mastery, to show the text what it "does not know"' [Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Translator's Preface to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), xx, lxxvii. Hereafter TPOG]. Derrida's work is within and without the work of Heidegger, and his other predecessors more broadly; it repeats it by means of alterity, it reverses it without rejecting it, offering a framework particularly useful for this project and my attempt to question the familiar terms of creativity, originality, and authorship. Following Derrida, the logic of the Iterative turn resides in an attempt at 'the unmaking of a construct' that also 'implies the possibility of rebuilding' [Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau', in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 140].

process, repeating and altering earlier aesthetic models and systems of thought in a chain of constant change of charged differences.

The contemporary turn should be seen, I suggest, as an iterative turn in such a broad sense. It should be understood as evocative of the modernist and postmodernist commitment to repetition associated with certain propensity for technological change as an aesthetic dominant. At the same time, this current Iterative turn is a turn towards iteration as a creative method and form that defines the cultural and aesthetic dynamics today. As a response to the postproduction condition, iteration, or the essence of iteration, perhaps – a general attitude towards reappropriating earlier paradigms of aesthetic thinking for a cultural moment – translates into specific forms of expression that assume repetition as a model of creativity. Here the principles of an iterative turn in general, and of a turn towards iteration triggered by the current cultural moment converge at the Iterative turn. In Heideggerian terms, the contemporary Iterative turn combines an essence of iteration and an Enframing of iteration at the same time, or, as Derrida would have it, an example of iteration in general – a condition of iterability – and a singular iteration in itself. Seen as such, iteration should be considered both a method of creative practice and a historical category of aesthetics. The contemporary turn that this thesis defines emerges as a result of a conflation of the two models, always intertwined in the contemporary iterative thinking, where the condition of iterability as an attitude to creative practice, finds its momentum and a manifestation in related iterative forms. Seen as such, iterability turns into a law of not only repetition itself but of postproduction creativity more broadly. While the possibility of a repetition of a particular creative form or mode of expression is always a probability, it is the specific context of the postproduction moment, I suggest, that creates a condition for the Iterative turn to manifest itself most explicitly. That is to say, iteration as a creative paradigm reveals itself in the mode of revealing that is most suited to it.

At the Iterative turn, the function of reproduction technologies is not simply a matter of technological reproducibility as a means to an end, but rather an end in itself. At the Iterative turn, an act appropriating already authored content turns into an expression of iterative thinking. Today, it is not simply an aestheticisation of technology or technologisation of aesthetics that are at stake. The ubiquity of contemporary digitalisation means that distinctions between the technological in the instrumental sense and the digital aesthetics are increasingly impossible to draw, with digital technology assuming a role of all-encompassing digital culture. It is in such a context that the Iterative turn emerges, a moment in which both technology and aesthetics are at a turning point, turning away from earlier paradigms without

rejecting them, and turning into one another as *technē*. Here, the process of digital reproduction loses its instrumental, purely functional associations, to assume its own all-pervasive iterative logic. Where the question of the aura[139] is no longer a creative concern, the iterative project that emerges as a result of reconceptualised attitudes towards technology transforms the 'danger' that acts of copying typically pose to creativity into a form of liberation from it, a 'saving power,'[140] transforming plagiarism into iteration, copying into a paradigm of creativity itself.

1.4. (UN)CREATIVE WRITING

Over the past decade similar thinking about the creative possibility of a copy has gained momentum in the experimental literary scene. Movements such as conceptual writing and flarf assume uncreativity as a creative method while poets associated with them assemble, copy, and repurpose texts to create new works of experimental literature. As Kenneth Goldsmith defines it, conceptual writing

> employs intentionally self and ego effacing tactics using uncreativity, unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as its precepts; information management, word processing, databasing, and extreme process as its methodologies; and boredom, valuelessness, and nutritionlessness as its ethos.[141]

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[139] I refer here to Walter Benjamin's notion of the 'aura'. The aura is an aesthetic category, a way of describing particular qualities of art that Benjamin saw waning in modernity as a result of increasing mechanisation of society. The aura of a work connotes its singularity and qualities such as authority, authenticity, and originality grounded explicitly in the Romantic understanding of creativity. As Benjamin argues, the aura disappears in the modern age, as a result of the possibilities of reproducibility that proliferate. Benjamin associates the notion of originality with an artwork's unique presence in space and time and argues that a reproduced piece loses the quality of originality exactly because it is always removed from the auratic original, because in reproduction the origin is always absent, and so the work loses the quality of originality, authenticity, and authority. Benjamin writes: 'the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity' [TWOA, 214].

[140] This statement is a reference to Heidegger's notions of *danger* and *saving power*. Heidegger understands modern technology as danger, danger to man, danger to Being, technology in its instrumental sense, as Enframing, 'endangers the relationship to the essence of truth' [QCT, 33]. Enframing, Heidegger explains, 'banishes man into that kind of revealing that is ordering. Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. Above all, Enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of *poiēsis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance' (27). But, for Heidegger, the danger always harbours the possibility of transformation, of a turn, there is a possibility of liberation in every danger. Heidegger writes: 'where Enframing reigns, there is danger in the highest sense. But where danger is, grows/The saving power also' (28). In line with Heidegger's argument, acts of copying emerge as antithetical to paradigms of creativity and as inherently creative acts at the same time. Copying assumes creative qualities exactly because it is dismissed as 'danger,' by law, by publishing standards, by prevailing notions of creativity and authorship.

[141] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Journal, Day One: Conceptual Poetics', *Harriet: a poetry blog*, 22 January 2007, accessed 20 May 2012, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/01/journal-day-one/. Conceptualism in writing will be discussed in more details in Chapter 3.

The core idea behind flarf poetry derives from a recognition of a generative textual potential that online search engines can offer. Flarf poems are composed or, maybe, more accurately, compiled, in the process that has been described as Google-sculpting, in which a poet uses the Internet search engine to generate results subsequently collaged or mashed up into a poem.

While reliance on such techniques – similar to the related developments in visual arts – has been extensively explored by the long-twentieth-century avant-gardes, digital technologies significantly expand the possibility of experimenting with textual appropriation. Conceptual poets, for example, self-consciously position themselves in the long line of avant-garde traditions, to fashion the uncreativity as 'a poetics of the moment, fusing the avant-garde impulse of the last century with the technologies of the present, one that proposes an expanded field for twenty-first century poetry.' [142] Calling for new responses to the current immersive digital environment, the paramount questions put forward by conceptualists reside in an attempt to interrogate the status of creativity in the age of digital reproduction; as Goldsmith puts it, 'what does it mean to be a poet in the Internet age?'[143] I associate this tendency to question the creative status quo and related emergence of uncreative poetics with the current postproduction moment that creates a particularly fertile ground for the growing interest in and subsequent proliferation of the text-based appropriation on the unprecedented level. Under the postproduction condition, the situation of creative writing changes. For poets such as Goldsmith innovation and experimentation become synonymous with a range of techniques of textual manipulation, organisation, and appropriation. As Goldsmith contends, acts of 'replicating, organizing, mirroring, archiving, hoarding, storing, reprinting, bootlegging, plundering, and transferring'[144] manifest the contemporary attitude to creativity to replace originality as the emblematic aesthetic paradigm.

While instances of writing by such iterative means will be discussed in much more detail in the following three chapters, I would like briefly to introduce examples of uncreative writing here by way of defining the attitude that they manifest. Goldsmith's works, for example, include appropriations of recorded everyday speech and overheard conversations as well as retypings of printed or broadcast news. Regardless of the source, Goldsmith's works assume an idea of a repetition and,

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Flarf is Dionysus. Conceptual Writing is Apollo. An Introduction to the 21st Century's Most Controversial Poetry Movements', *Poetry* Magazine, July/August 2009, accessed 12 February 2011, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/article/237176.
[144] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Being Boring', in *Electronic Poetry Centre*, 2004, accessed 26 June 2011. http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/goldsmith_boring.html. Hereafter BB.

hence, a copy as a textual dominant. For instance, his *Day* (2003) – discussed in Chapter 3 – is a transcription of the entire issue of *The New York Times* from September 1, 2000, word for word, inclusive of all content; commercial ads, cinema listings, bar codes, and photo captions are all included.

Like Goldsmith, Vanessa Place works with appropriated texts. Her *Tragodia* trilogy (*Statement of Facts* (2010), *Statement of the Case* (2011), *Argument* (2011)) repurposes legal documents of sex offence cases to present them as poetry. For Place, 'authorship doesn't matter. Content doesn't matter. Form doesn't matter. Meter doesn't matter. All that matters is the trace of poetry.'[145] This rejection of authorship, and a manifestation of a conceptual take on authorship at the same time, reverberates clearly with echoes of Rauschenberg's statement on his portrait of Iris Clert. 'This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so,'[146] declared Rauschenberg in 1961; *Tragodia* is poetry because Vanessa Place says so. Place's text is particularly interesting in the context of my discussion and explicitly foregrounds the characteristic divergence of conceptual and legal thinking. The contextual transition, from a legal file to a small press poetry volume, provokes a shift in generic categorisation of the text. This transformation from legal to poetic discourse raises questions of objectivity of both, one driven by the commitment to seemingly unambiguous, factual truths, the latter grounded in subjectivity and affect. The appropriation of the exact same discourse to exercise the expressive possibilities of either or both blurs boundaries between objectivity and subjectivity, between truth and poetic licence, to uncover the contingency of language, its unreliable nature. Here, the nature of authorship changes. Although there is only one author involved here – Place is a conceptual poet as well as a practising appellate criminal defence attorney and in her poetic experiments utilises her own briefs as sources – Vanessa Place the creative writer and Vanessa Place the writer of legal documents enjoy a markedly different status. A discrepancy between categories of authorship as conceived of by disparate discourses of law and poetry emerges. This transition from law to poetry particularly explicitly foregrounds the constructedness of any act of authorship, here reliant solely on the contextual framework, not the discourse and form of expression but on the declaration of a text as law or as poetry alone. A peculiar marriage of creative conceptual and legal assertion surfaces, with context turning into the singular normative factor used to determine the status of the text, evocative of Goldsmith's understanding of contemporary creative practice,

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[145] Vanessa Place, 'Echo', *Academia.edu*, accessed 10 October 2014, https://www.academia.edu/2778724/ECHO.

[146] Robert Rauschenberg, *Portrait of Iris Clert*, 1961, *ArtSlant*, accessed 19 September 2014, http://www.artslant.com/ny/works/show/641741-this-is-a-portrait-of-iris-clert-if-i-say-so-3-of-3

conceptualising context as the new content.[147] Although, from copyright's point of view, it is the expression and hence the content that matters, here the nature of Place's expression is inescapably bound and determined by the context. In fact, in case of Place's practice, only the context informs and determines the generic classification. The treatment of the very same expression of thought and ideas as either law or poetry presupposes a differentiation in the limits of copyrightability of both. In fact, the shift from law to poetry results in a reconceptualisation of the text's copyright status. Although appellate briefs can be copyrighted, they are usually treated as public material, available for circulation in the public domain once filed in court. Uncopyrighted, the text of legal documents as legal documents, repurposed as poetry, unambiguously warrants copyright protection and is published copyright to Vanessa Place.[148]

Among Place's other projects is a Twitter-based retyping of the entire text of *Gone with the Wind* (1936), by Margaret Mitchell, 140 characters at a time, where the technological constraint – the character limit – turns into a poetic constraint and a formula for composing recycled, highly fragmented works of literature. Social media also play an important role in Simon Morris's *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* (2010), a retyping of Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957). Morris's work, however, published as a paperback designed to look exactly like the Penguin edition used as a source, is and at the same time is not an exact copy of the novel [Figure 3]. Similarly to Place's Twitter-based experiment, the original medium that Morris employs emerges as a form of textual constraint, destabilising the copy and as a result the linearity and readability of the text, to foreground the form and the process rather than the content. *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* is a reprint of Morris's blog devoted to retyping Kerouac's novel, one page at a time. As such, the paperback version of the project follows the logic of blog publishing, to preserve the reversed order in which blog posts typically appear, foregrounding their commitment to the new as a characteristic feature of this publishing method. While Morris worked his way through *On the Road* a page per blog post, in a traditional, linear fashion, from the first page to the novel's closing sentence, Morris's reader is faced first with what Morris read and re-typed last. Reading Morris means reading the last page *of On the Road* first. Such active engagement with the dynamic of social media that dictates the form of these works serves as a significant manifestation of the affinities of writing, and creativity more broadly, with technology today. Place's *Gone with the Wind* and Morris's *On the Road* not only adopt the dynamic of the digital textuality as a

[147] UW, 3.
[148] Vanessa Place, *Tragodía 1: Statement of Fact* (Los Angeles, CA: Blanc Press, 2010).

conceptual dominant but actively engage with the media that contribute to the proliferation of those tendencies themselves. This approach to engaging with technology draws attention to the inherent discrepancies between originals and their copies, foregrounding alterity rather than similarity, as if repeating Derrida's characteristic association of repetition with a difference.

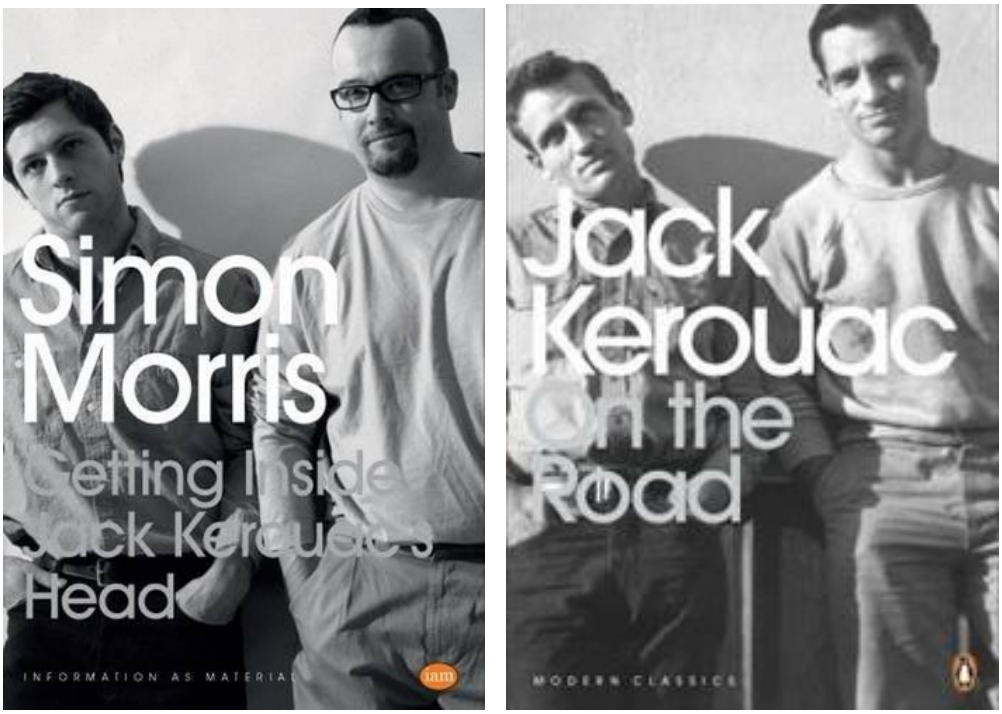

FIGURE 3: SIMON MORRIS, *GETTING INSIDE JACK KEROUAC'S HEAD* (2010) AND JACK'S KEROUAC, *ON THE ROAD*, PENGUIN EDITION (2000)

Echoes of Bourriaud's postproduction aesthetics reverberate clearly in Goldsmith's, Place's and Morris's projects. Theirs seems an appropriate response to a new condition of writing, negotiating not only the abundance of available material, ready to be repurposed, but also foregrounding the transition from postmodern to postproduction modes of appropriation – from objects to texts, from things to information. 'Faced with unprecedented amount of available text,' Goldsmith writes, 'the problem is not needing to write more of it; instead we must learn to negotiate the vast quantity that exists.'[149] This hyperbolically derivative aesthetics as a creative methodology emerges as a mode of information management, a curatorial rather than authorial practice – a trajectory addressed in more detail Chapter 3. As if repeating after Bourriaud, Goldsmith's, Place's, and Morris's aesthetic question for the contemporary culture is no longer 'what can we make that is new?' but, instead, 'how can we make do with what we have? […], how can we produce singularity and meaning

[149] UW, 1.

from the chaotic mass of objects, names and references that constitutes out daily life?'[150]

1.5. COPYING AS A POSTMODERN GESTURE: J.D. CALIFORNIA, *60 YEARS LATER: COMING THROUGH THE RYE*

If the task of contemporary poets is to reuse, recycle and reappropriate, then *Day*, *Tragodia* and *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* all exemplify legitimate expressions of authorial practice. And while numerous experimental works of literature do breach copyright, the great majority escape the attention of copyright holders. The difference in the interest that similar creative attitudes generate, within visual arts and literature, mainstream publishing and the avant-garde, seems to reside in the economic rather than legal aspects of this practice. While Prince's celebrity status is also associated with lucrative sales of his work, avant-garde poets live, as Goldsmith puts it, 'in an economy of no economy.'[151] Theirs is an economy that presupposes intellectual rather than financial gains. And although Goldsmith's philosophy and practice might seem to diverge – his work has earned him a teaching post at the University of Pennsylvania, a residency at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) as well as a White House reading – his rise to fame in the creative scene is an exception rather than a rule. Regardless of such marks of recognition and institutionalisation of conceptualism and related practices, the profits from appropriation literature as compared with appropriation art (in some cases – those of legal interest) remain minuscule. But such a divergence of cultural and market capital seems indicative of the level of creative liberty at stake. The avant-garde gesture in writing, as Lethem observes, tends to be understood as such.

> It's not plagiarism, and it's also not copyright infringement, or not in any way that anybody's going to get excited about. The truth has mostly to do with the cash on the barrelhead. [...] When Kathy Acker grabs a piece of – well, usually she grabbed Melville or Dickens, first of all, that stuff is in public domain – but even if she borrowed a writer who was technically still copyrighted, there's not a lot at stake financially. A publisher is not going to think, 'We are selling fewer of X because she borrowed Y for her odd little avant-garde novel.'[152]

[150] PCAS, 17.
[151] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Goldsmith on Poetry and Copyright', *Harriet: a poetry blog*, 30 May 2007, accessed 15 March 2012, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/05/goldsmith-on-poetry-copyright/.
[152] Jonathan Lethem, 'Free Culture: A Conversation with Jonathan Lethem', an interview by Kembrew McLeod, in *Cutting Across Media: Appropriation Art, Interventionist Collage, and Copyright Law,* ed. Kembrew McLeod and Rudolf Kuenzli (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 296.

To put it bluntly, there is no money in avant-garde poetry. Marginal in economic terms, experimental writing remains insignificant in copyright terms. Here copyright emerges as, first and foremost, an economic right, with avant-garde as a manifestation of, as Goldsmith puts it, a copyright loophole.[153]

As such, legal discussions of literary appropriation today evolve around two, now seminal, cases – *Suntrust Bank* v. *Houghton Mifflin and Co*. and *Salinger* v. *Colting,* both caught up in legal disputes because of the status and popularity of either the author or the text appropriated. *Suntrust Bank* centred on Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), a revision of Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* written from the point of view of slaves and servants on the plantation of Tara. The Mitchell estate saw Randall's novel as derivative and infringing, while Randall herself conceived of her work as a response to and a comment on a text that constitutes the wider cultural landscape.[154] The *Salinger* case emerged as J.D. Salinger's response to a publication of Fredrik Colting's (writing as John David California) *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye* (2009), billed as a sequel to Salinger's classis novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). The case was an attempt at enjoining Colting and his publisher from 'manufacturing, distributing, shipping, advertising, promoting, selling or otherwise disseminating the book [...] in or to the United States.'[155] Although both *Suntrust* and *Salinger* are important and indicative of legal thinking that is antithetical to paradigms of creativity that emerged in the wake of postmodernism, I will briefly focus on *Salinger* as a more recent case that builds on the *Suntrust* ruling.

60 Years Later is a first-person narrative told, just like *The Catcher in the Rye*, from the point of view of omnipresent Holden Caulfield, renamed as Mr C, making extensive use of the characteristic features of Holden as depicted by Salinger. Colting's protagonist has memories of events from *The Catcher*, engages with the same acquaintances as Salinger's Holden; he has many of the same adventures, and uses the same vocabulary and tone. *60 Years Later* is, as Colting puts it, 'just like the first novel, he leaves, but this time he's not at prep school, he's at a retirement home in upstate New York [...] it's pretty much like the first book in that he roams around the

[153] 'I've actually found a major loophole in copyright culture, literary culture, in distributive culture which happens to be, for lack of a better word, the avant-garde — which nobody can understand. It's so hard for people to understand this stuff. And number two, it's really got no commercial value whatsoever. It has great historical and intellectual value, but people lose money when they try to release this stuff so most of it goes unreleased. So it's been this, kind of, really beautiful grey area where it's all out in the open and it's all in front but you get a pass on it in a way that legitimate economies don't give you that latitude.' [Goldsmith, interview by Boon (unedited)].

[154] The case was settled in 2002 when Mitchell estate dropped the litigation. Copies of Randall's novel distributed after the case are identified as an unauthorised parody.

[155] *Salinger v. Colting*, 607 F. 3d 68 (2010).

city, inside himself and his past.'[156] The key difference between the two texts resides in the temporal shift and Colting's introduction of Salinger as a character, portrayed as an author who tries to kill Holden to free himself from his protagonist, but, unable to do so, sets him free instead. Salinger, as a copyright holder, raised literary, copyright, and fair competition issues with respect to Colting's novel, and claimed infringement of both the character of Holden and the novel overall, as an unlicensed derivative work. Colting's fair use defence and his claims that *60 Years Later* is a parody were all rejected. As the court noted, 'it is hardly parodic to repeat the same exercise [...], just because society and the characters have aged.'[157] Similar arguments were used in *Salinger* v. *Colting* and *Cariou* v. *Prince*, both ruled in the first instance by Judge Deborah Batts in district court. Evocative of the approach to Prince's work, Colting's novel was deemed not transformative enough, lacking in critical commentary with respect to the source is appropriates; 'just because a work 'recast[s], transform[s], or adapt[s] [...] an original work into a new mode of presentation, [...] does not make the work "transformative" in the sense the first fair use factor.'[158] The addition of Salinger as a character, although recognised by the court as 'something new,' was treated as insufficient to render the sequel transformative. As the Brief for Plaintiff-Appellee reads:

> that character is not a tool Colting uses to critique either Holden or Catcher. Certainly Colting may write literary criticism of Catcher comparing its events to biographical material about Salinger; he may write criticism about Holden drawing parallels between Salinger's like and Holden's; but that is not what he did. Rather Colting recounts and embroiders upon the 'biography' of a fictional character. Taking fictional 'facts' or characters and placing them in another context is not 'transformative.'[159]

Pervasive here is the characteristic dependence on the Romantic ideas of authorship that inevitably limits the availability of fair use defence and, hence, the scope of recognised creative practices.

From the literary point of view, Coting's is a standard approach, one rooted in widely acknowledged and now firmly established literary traditions of

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[156] J.D. California, quoted in Alison Flood, 'Catcher in the Rye sequel published, but not by Salinger', *The Guardian*, 14 May 2009, accessed 30 November 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/may/14/catcher-in-the-rye-sequel.
[157] *Salinger v. Colting*, 641 F. Supp 2d 250 (2009).
[158] Ibid.
[159] *Salinger v. Colting*, 09-2878-cv, 2d civ (2010).

intertextuality[160] and metafiction[161] but not recognised as such by the court that gave preference to a quantitative comparison of the two novels.[162] For Batts and similarly, later, for the Court of Appeals, all that mattered was that the two novels show similarities that were so substantial that Colting's appropriation could not be considered a manifestation of a transformative fair use. The struggles to classify Colting's novel in a manner that would allow for a fair legal treatment were unrelated to literary categories at stake. Instead, the case centred on a legal terminological debate in an attempt to define *60 Years Later* as a parody or a sequel to determine the nature of authorship and originality in the work. But, in law these categories diverge from related literary definitions. Parody should be considered a form of intertextual allusion. It employs, as Margaret A. Rose explains, 'the devices of its original while laying them bare.' [163] For Linda Hutcheon, parody 'is related to burlesque, travesty, pastiche, plagiarism, quotation, and allusion, but remains distinct from them.' [164] And 'while the act and form of parody are those of incorporation, its function is that of separation and contrast.'[165]

The legal definition of parody resides in its differentiation from satire, where the two are viewed as unambiguously defined binary categories. Satire, as understood

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[160] Intertextuality relies on an engagement with a canonical text as a framing device. A text composed in accord with principles of intertextuality assumes writing through another text as a method, a creative attempt at composing new text that comments and openly references the source. As Dentith explains, what defines intertextual writing is 'the interrelatedness of writing, the fact that all written utterances – texts – situate themselves in relation to texts that precede them, and are in turn alluded to or repudiated by texts that follow' [Simon Dentith, *Parody* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.]. The coinage of the term is associated with Julia Kristeva as it grew out of the late 1960s debates in semiotics and the proliferation of poststructuralist thought, Barthesian death of the author among others. As such, intertextuality is a means of writing consciously engaged in subverting the familiar paradigms of authorship and not an exercise in unlawful copying or plagiarism. No attempt at claiming ownership of the source or hiding the source is attempted in works that are intertextual. Examples of intertextual practices abound in twentieth-century literature and include work of authors such as Kathy Acker, Jean Rhys and J.M. Coetzee.

[161] Metafiction is a characteristically postmodern literary device used to foreground a self-consciously fictional status of a work. 'In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text' [Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), 2].

[162] A statement included in the Brief for Plaintiff-Appellee is a good example of the quantitative approach taken: 'only 6,2 % of the novel (including all of Chapter 20) includes anything that includes or references the Salinger character. Defendants ignore that "Salinger" could readily be removed from the Sequel and it would remain intact, a freestanding (although infringing) novel. On the other hand, if Holden character were removed from the Sequel, not a single page would remain' [*Salinger v. Colting*, 09-2878-cv].

[163] Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 83.

[164] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 43.

[165] Ibid, 34.

by U.S. copyright law, assumes a more comprehensive function as a tool of critiquing and commenting on all aspects of society. It is too general and ambiguous a category to be recognised as fair use and so not protected by copyright.[166] The function of parody, on the other hand, is to critically engage with a specific work. Such intentional focus on the critical commentary of a clearly defined text allows for an unambiguous assessment in line with the requirements of transformative use, and so is considered fair use and an acceptable practice. But the creative reality is much more complex than law would have it, the boundaries between satire and parody more fluid, and their relationship complex. As Hutcheon explains, satire frequently uses parodic art forms, while parody is interested in the text that is 'imitated' not only because of the qualities of that text itself, but also, as Simon Dentith put it, 'to gain purchase in the modern world.'[167] Where legal and literary thinking about parody do overlap, is in their shared preoccupation with the 'intention to parody.' But while law's understanding of the parodic act is limited to a transformative use of a very specific work, and that work alone, Hutcheon points to a more inclusive creative possibilities afforded by acts of parody in literature. 'When we speak of parody,' Hutcheon writes, 'we do not just mean two texts that just interrelate in a certain way. We also imply an intention to parody another work (or a set of conventions).'[168]

In *Salinger*, similarly to *Cariou*, the issues of copying from the source proved problematic not simply because of the act itself, but as a result of authorial intention, to comment, or not, on the material appropriated. This reasoning is based on a conjecture that courts can not only rely on but also definitely determine authorial intention, a stance antithetical to the attitudes assumed in any attempt at writing at the wake of postmodernism, and creative and philosophical thinking that gave rise to intertextuality. The discrepancy in the attitudes is particularly apparent when considered with respect to parody's characteristic place in the literary culture. The narrow legal definition ignores the highly charged cultural negotiations involved in different approaches to writing by means of rewriting to describe any text that legally reuses other texts as a parodic rendering. What makes the legal approach particularly problematic is the fact that 'parody,' as Linda Hutcheon explains, 'is a perfectly postmodern form [...] for it paradoxically incorporates and challenges that which it parodies.'[169] The postmodern attitude is completely disregarded in the copyright's

[166] This legal distinction between parody and satire was originally made by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Campbell* v. *Acuff-Rose Music, Inc.*, 510 U.S. 569, 1994.
[167] Dentith, *Parody*, 17.
[168] Hutcheon, *A Theory*, 22.
[169] Linda Hutcheon, *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 11.

appropriation of parody as a creative category. Any attempt at recognising an instance of creative practice as a manifestation of parody in legal terms always emerges in a conflicting framework. Paradoxically, legal understanding of parody inevitably inscribes a work of parody into a framework of a Romantic paradigms of authorship and related conceptions of originality, paradigms that parody works to subvert and question. In its attempt to deal with creative practices that are inherently associated with the subversion of such creative paradigms, practices that, as Hutcheon put it, force 'a reconsideration of the idea of the origin and originality that is compatible with other postmodern interrogations of liberal humanist assumptions,' [170] copyright creates a framework that is implicitly flawed, inherently contradictory, and inadequate with respect to creative practices that have been proliferating for over half a century now.

Unlike parody and satire, copyright law considers sequels irrespective of the manner in which they engage with original texts. Sequels fall into the category of derivative works and so give copyright holders the right to authorise as well as to prohibit their publication. But, perhaps most tellingly, a sequel is considered in purely economic terms as it offers potential of a publication for profit and, as such, can affect the market value of the original. In other words, *60 Years Later* as a sequel can not only impact on the sales of *The Catcher* itself but it also prevents Salinger from potentially authorising other sequels or writing a sequel himself, making profit from these hypothetical publications, regardless of whether he did or did not intend to do so.[171] *60 Years Later* as a parody, on the other hand, would be considered legally acceptable. While an unauthorised sequel is a copyright infringement, a parody,

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[170] Ibid.

[171] According to the Brief for Plaintiff-Appellate, 'Salinger's agent attested to the fact that offers have been made to make derivatives. That Colting marketed his book as a sequel to appeal to the same market says volumes about the existence of that market and his intent to usurp it. Since there are no derivatives on the market, defendants seem to be first to market in this sphere. The first derivative of an acclaimed original generally garners more commercial success than successive derivatives.' It is worth returning to the example of *Gone with the Wind* and derivative works that appropriate it. While Randall's take on the novel was considered controversial from the point of view of the Mitchell estate, there are works that appropriate the novel. One representative example is Alexandra Ripley's *Scarlett* (1991), marketed as the sequel to *Gone with the Wind*. Copyright in *Scarlett*, however, resides with the Mitchell trust, and not with the novel's author. Controversially, copyright law, set up to promote progress, freedom of speech, and to protect the authors, does not allow for unconstrained appropriation and creative engagement with pre-published material, but it does enable a publication of texts in which the privileges are renounced. Randall's novel, in contrast, is now aggressively marketed as an unauthorised parody, and a note on the copyright page reads: 'this novel is the author's critique of and reaction to the world described in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. It is not authorised by the Stephens Mitchell Trust, and no sponsorship or endorsement by the Mitchell Trust is implied.' Copyright page in Alice Randall, *The Wind Done Gone* (Boston and New York: Houghton Miffin Company, 2002).

paradoxically, exists as Linda Hutcheon describes it, as 'an authorised transgression.' [172] The result of the strikingly divergent copyright treatment of parodies, satires, and sequels, is a widespread tendency to seek a post-hoc classification of works that reuse pre-existing material as parodies regardless of the manner in which they engage with their sources, a stance also unsuccessfully attempted by Colting. But the limited scope for reusing, adapting, and appropriating works already in circulation is indicative of the wider copyright attitude towards practices that diverge from the familiar, unambiguous models of singular authorship. As Kate O'Neill puts it, 'Salinger wrote a wonderful book and launched an enduring literary character; Colting wrote an amateurish take-off that would probably not have gained any notice but for its evocation of Salinger and Holden Caulfield.'[173] Questions of literary quality and judgement aside, O'Neill's is a stand typical for and illustrative of legal take on of practices such as Colting's. From a legal point of view, an act of writing by means of rewriting emerges as 'an amateurish take-off,' 'a wholesale piracy,'[174] or, as Judge Guido Calabresi described it, 'a dismal piece of work.'[175] It can only be rejected as derivative and infringing.

Even though the initial, preliminary injunction granted by Batts was vacated by the Court of Appeals, calling for further investigation, the case was subsequently settled out of court in December 2010. In line with the settlement conditions, the novel is currently not available on the American market but sold outside of the U.S.A. and Canada. However, its current U.K. edition reflects the ruling and its marketing has changed. While its original cover styled *60 Years Later* as a 'sequel to one of our most beloved classics,'[176] the current edition instead describes it as 'an Unauthorised Fictional Examination of the Relationship Between J.D. Salinger and his Most Famous Character.'[177] There is no indication that the edition currently available is

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[172] Hutcheon, *A Theory*, 101.
[173] Kate O'Neill, 'The Content of Their Characters: J.D. Salinger, Holden Caulfield, and Fredrik Colting', *University of Washington School of Law Legal Studies Research Paper,* 23 (2011), 7.
[174] Phyllis Westberg, Affidavit, 09 civ 5095 (DAB), 1 July 2009.
[175] Guido Calabresi, cited in Michael M. Ratoza, 'To be both a judge and a literary critic', *U.S. IP Law*, 4 September 2009, accessed 08 October 2013, http://www.us-ip-law.com/2009/09/to-be-both-judge-and-literary-critic.html.
[176] John David California, *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye*, 1st ed., (Windupbird Publishing, 2009), back cover. Windupbird do not specify a place of publication. At the time of writing the publisher is not traceable and seems to have ceased activity. Whilst the pre- and post-*Salinger v. California* editions of the novel do not include information about the edition or changes to the book as a result of the court's decision, I label the two as 1st and 2nd edition for the sake of clarity.
[177] John David California, *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye*, 2nd ed., (Windupbird Publishing, 2009), back cover. The edition issued after *Salinger* does not specify a publication date. The book was most likely reprinted in 2011, following the settlement, however the copyright page only includes the year of the first publication. I am citing in line with the copyright page.

altered in any way, and the copyright page does not list details of the publication date post the lawsuit.[178] This shift in publishing attitude is important. While such a manipulation of legal categories enables a lawful distribution of the novel, it also inscribes it into a framework of categories of authorship that are inappropriate. It does not allow for iterative thinking as creative to construe it as purely derivative and infringing.

1.6. COPYING AS A POSTPRODUCTION GESTURE: HELENE HEGEMANN, *AXOLOTL ROADKILL*

A similar approach to publishing a work controversial from the point of view of copyright was assumed by Ullstein Verlag, a publisher of Helene Hegemann's *Axolodtl Roadkill* (2010), a text, I suggest, driven by postproduction rather than postmodern thinking so prominent in Colting's approach. My focus in this thesis is not on postmodern aesthetics and literary practice. But the debates about the postmodern categories of parody and the legal inability to successfully accommodate them are key to distinguishing between what I see as an inherently contemporary postproduction, iterative writing practices from related postmodern gestures. Hegemann's project serves as a useful case in point. I am interested in a juxtaposition of Colting's and Hegemann's approaches to writing as a means of delineating the distinction between postmodern and postproduction approaches to authorship, originality, and acts of repetition.

Hegemann's novel, published in Germany in 2010 to a widespread critical acclaim, faced accusations of plagiarism after Deef Pirmasen, a blogger, identified a range of works Hegemann cited in the novel without acknowledgement. The main source Hegemann drew from extensively was a blog, airen.wordpress.com, later published as a novel *Strobo* (2009) by SuKuLTuR, Berlin. A sample passage from Hegemann's novel reads:

> a rococo building closer to the Turkish part of Schönenberrg that the gay part and only a hundred yards away from the two branches of Lidl

[178] This, again, is a result of the settlement conditions. As *Publisher's Weekly* notes: 'In addition, the settlement agreement bars Colting from using the title "Coming through the Rye"; forbids him from dedicating the book to Salinger; and would prohibit Colting or any publisher of the book from referring to *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger, the book being "banned" by Salinger, or from using the litigation to promote the book' [Andrew Albanese, 'J.D. Salinger Estate, Swedish Author Settle Copyright Case, *Publishers Weekly*, 11 January 2011, accessed 23 February 2011, http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industrynews/publisher-news/article/45738-j-d-salinger-estate-swedish-author-settle-copyright-suit.html]. The agreement is final and terms are confidential and so the document is not currently available. Interestingly, the current edition, although avoiding the term 'sequel' in favour of 'unauthorised fictional examination' is still dedicated to Salinger, and uses the banned subtitle.

> with the best opening hours in the city [...] corridor with black wood and mirrors.[179]

As compared with the original source:

> A rococo building, inside dark wood and mirrors, located closer to the Turkish part of Schönenberg than the gay part [...] one of the two Lidl stores with best opening hours in Berlin.[180]

In the official statement issued in response to the plagiarism claims Hegemann declared:

> The plagiarism accusations – how it all works in terms of legislation, I unfortunately don't exactly know. Personally [...] I consider my behaviour and my work method completely legitimate [...] There is no such thing as originality anyway, just authenticity.[181]

The distinction that Hegemann draws between that which is original and that which could be considered authentic is particularly telling. Hegemann's approach towards working with borrowed material emerges as an authentic, creative project, a manifestation of an attitude towards writing that not only allows for but is reliant on acts of appropriation as creative acts. The first edition of *Axolotl Roadkill* was a clear manifestation of this attitude. It drew freely and without acknowledgement from numerous sources, most extensively from Aireen's Blog but included referenced quotations from one established author, David Foster Wallace. In a statement printed alongside Hegemann's, her publisher, Ullstein Verlag, contended that Hegemann identified Wallace's work as the only source of quotations that required a reprint permission, which was sought accordingly. As Ullstein declared, 'the responsibility of a young, talented author who grew up within the Internet culture of "sharing" can be arguable. The position of Ullstein Verlag is unequivocal: all quotations have to be acknowledged and their use approved by their authors.'[182] Ullstein's reference to the Internet and the dynamics of content production and dissemination online as influencing the attitudes towards creativity is particularly telling and points to a wider project that this thesis attempts to put forward.

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[179] Helene Hegemann, *Axolotl Roadkill*, trans. Kathy Darbishire (London: Corsaire, 2012), 195. Hereafter ARKD.
[180] Airen.wordpress.com later published by SuKuLTuR, Berlin, in 'Quellennachweis und Danksgang', in Helene Hegemann, *Axolodtl Roadkill*, trans. my own (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 2010), 205. Hereafter AR.
[181] '"Axolotl Roadkill": Helene Hegemann und Ullstein Verlegerin Dr. Siv Bublitz antworten auf Plagiatsvorwurf', trans. my own, in *BuchMarkt*, 7 February 2010, accessed 25 January 2011, http://www.buchmarkt.de/content/41393-axolotl-roadkill-helene-hegemann-und-ullstein-verlegerin-dr-siv-bublitz-antworten-auf-plagiatsvorwurf.htm.
[182] Ibid.

A clear manifestation of the divergent creative and legal attitudes, the novel, currently in its fourth edition, now comes with an appendix listing sources of all quotations Hegemann used. As the introductory note to the works cited reads 'fragments of [...] quotations (from books, songs, films, blogs, etc.) are incorporated in the text, as verbatim or modified quotations, or inspiration.'[183] The compiled references bring to the fore Hegemann's creative method, stress the novel's derivative nature and its reliance on appropriated material. However, no references are included in the main body of the text, and quotations are not printed in quotation marks. Instead, the appendix provides a list of all sources, arranged by the work from which each quotation was lifted, rather than simply in the order they appeared in the novel. Additionally, each quotation from the appropriated source is printed alongside a corresponding passage from *Axolotl Roadkill*. The appendix opens with a list of all excerpts from Airen's blog, followed by a list of 'further quotations (partly modified and, in the case of some excerpts, dissipated over longer passages)'[184] including texts by Malcolm Lowry, Jim Jarmusch quoting Jean-Luc Goddard, Kathy Acker, David Foster Wallace, Maurice Blanchot, and The Zombies. Additional sections of the appendix include quotations from private correspondence, excerpts from emails, overheard conversations and further quotations lifted from the Internet, including readers' comments posted online in response to interviews with Hegemann, as well as a list of 'thank yous' and some references to authors that served as an inspiration but whose texts were not directly incorporated into the novel.

Paradoxically, the detailed reference and acknowledgement list proves flawed. Page numbers listed in the appendix are incongruous with the main body of the text and there is a consistent discrepancy of two pages (quotations that the appendix lists as printed on page 199 are to be found on page 197, etc.). Although clearly an unfortunate editorial oversight, the misprint seems, in an interesting way, to serve as an extension of and a chance commentary on Hegemann's uncreative game. This particularly fitting disjunction foregrounds a peculiar juxtaposition of the significance and at the same time futility of the references, of the copyright standards and constraints they impose on the contemporary notions of creativity and authorship. From academic and legal points of view, the appendix is essential. The references are significant in that they serve as a means of inscribing the novel within a frame of norms and established intellectual property standards and not because of how and what they contribute to (or detract from) the creative practice itself. While satisfying the official framework of the legislative safety net and recognised publishing and

[183] AR, 203.
[184] Ibid, 206.

academic norms, the references seem to carry little relevance to the interest the novel is generating and to the text itself. Here references lead, literally, nowhere; once the text becomes a work cut to fit the established paradigms, no attention seems to be paid to the sources. In such a framework no distinction can be made between plagiarism and creative practices of appropriation and intertextuality. In a property-driven copyright economy, appropriation inevitably turns into a form of plagiarism. A model for cultural production and a mode of artistic exploration so prominent since the inception of postmodernism, appropriation remains too far removed from the legal assumptions and copyright's understanding of notions of authorship, authenticity, and originality to be regarded a legitimate practice, with art and normative reality conflicting on the ideological level. Postmodernism might have adopted the concept of playing against the rules as a rule of creativity (an approach also very much prominent in today's new media-induced aesthetics), but, to return to Halbert, 'when brought to court the postmodernist will (evidently) lose.'[185]

Understood as such, plagiarism, like authorship, is an exclusionary category and remains a question of ethics rather than aesthetics. Hence, Hegemann's creative exercise proves an example of a conscious breach of ethical guidelines that underpin the normative standards of contemporary creativity. The framework does not leave space for subversive experimentation, turning every work into a subject of unambiguously defined, unified and at the same time unifying set of rules and regulations. Informed and directed by such standards, our collective cultural conscience inevitably condemns Hegemann's practice as transgressive and immoral. The contemporary understanding of what it means to author a text, to create a work of art, remains determined by the prevailing, Romantic image of an artist as an inspired genius conflated with property-oriented notions of authorship and originality. The reference list as it appears in the fourth edition of *Axolotl Roadkill* might serve purely as a means of fulfilling legal requirements but, at the same time, its inclusion could be seen as an attempt at placing the novel within a frame of twenty-first-century mash-up culture. Consciously giving prominence to Hegemann's plagiarisms, such a contextualisation foregrounds the approach not as a transgression but as a conscious creative choice; not as a negation of authorship but a mode of authorship in its own right.

It seems highly unlikely that the initial omission of relevant references could be put down to Hegemann's ignorance in the field of copyright legislation that she eagerly stressed when the novel was first published. Her frequent comments on the nature of her creative practice as well as the sources she drew from clearly indicate an

[185] Halbert, 116.

awareness of both creative and critical developments in appropriation arts, notions of collage and intertextuality. Her particular tribute to Kathy Acker could not go unnoticed in the context.[186] Interestingly, the latest edition of Hegemann's novel concludes her list of quotations with the following statement:

> This novel follows the aesthetic principles of intertextuality and, as such, can contain further quotations. Ullstein Verlag have endeavoured to acknowledge all the rights' holders that the publisher are aware of. Owners of any copyrighted material included in the book that remains unacknowledged are requested to contact the publisher.[187]

Through this approach, Ullstein shift the responsibility for accurate acknowledgement of sources from the author who cites to the author of the citation itself. And although the statement serves as no more than a manifestation of the necessary precaution measures, it also proves indicative of the complex and subjective nature of appropriation and related practices that places plagiarism first and foremost in the eyes of the beholder.[188]

This attitude is echoed in one of the passages in the novel itself, a self-conscious commentary on the nature of composition and aesthetic practice at stake:

> 'Berlin is here to mix everything with everything [...] I steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels my imagination [...]. Films, music, books, paintings, cold-cuts poetry, photos, conversations, dreams ...'
> 'street signs, clouds ...'
> 'light and shadow, that's right, because my work and my theft are authentic as long as something speaks directly to my soul. It's not where I take things from – it's where I take them to.'
> 'So you didn't make it up?'
> 'No. It's from some blogger.'[189]

Traces of Hegemann's transgressive practice might have been hidden in the first edition of the novel, but only hidden in plain sight, overtly referenced in the passage above. As at direct metatextual commentary, the passage is significant in that it points to a multilayered nature of Hegemann's appropriation. But it also serves as a reflection on the contemporary iterative culture more broadly. Commenting on this excerpt in an interview for *The Observer* Hegemann pointed out that, although listed in the appendix as one of the fragments lifted from Airen's blog, this particular quotation originally comes from Jim Jarmusch engaging in an act of appropriation, quoting Jean-Luc Goddard. As such, *Axolotl Roadkill* positions itself in a long tradition of appropriation and intertextuality; this is not simply Hegemann quoting

[186] The appendix includes the following statement: 'Particular thanks to Kathy Acker'.
[187] AR, 209.
[188] I borrow this notion from Marilyn Randall in Randall, *Pragmatic Plagiarism,* vii.
[189] ARKD, 5.

'some blogger,' it is, instead, Hegemann, quoting Airen, quoting Jim Jarmush, quoting Jean-Luc Goddard: 'what I was accused of "stealing,"' commented Hegemann, 'has already been stolen,'[190] multiple times.

A similar contextualisation as afforded by the appendix in the fourth German edition seems to lack in the recent English translation of the novel, published by Corsair, London in 2012 and translated by Katy Derbyshire. Unlike the original, the translation does not include a comparable, detailed index. The comprehensive passage-by-passage compilation of derivative material and sources printed by Ullstein in 2010 is limited here to a brief acknowledgement.[191] With the editorial approach, the character of the appendix changes, turning it into a list of sources disguised as an extended 'thank you' note. The English appendix does refer to Airen's text as a source but does not specify the extent of this contribution. Interestingly, the English edition lists Airen's work in its print form only, as a novel *Strobo*. The reference to the blog, a key source for Hegemann, is omitted (in contrast, the German appendix refers to the blog as the primary material but acknowledges the later print publication). Kathy Acker, alongside most sources listed in the German edition, also features in the English translation. However, certain omissions occur: the note on intertextuality is not included, quotations from private emails, overheard conversations or forum comments all fail to merit a mention. As such, the English edition only references traditional, tangible material, unambiguously subject to copyright protection. This exclusion of any digital or intangible references, sources that do not immediately fall into the traditionally understood copyright categories, immediately significantly alters the cultural frame that seems to determine the creative dynamic behind *Axolotl Roadkill*, removing the novel from the context of the contemporary digital copy-paste aesthetics that the text foregrounds, of its inherent textuality as intertextuality, driven by iterative thinking. The editorial approach inevitably construes a different interpretation, a different approach to the text; on the one hand shifting focus away from the controversy that surrounded the novel when it was first published and turning attention to the text itself, but at the same time, I argue, detracting from a crucial aspect of the aesthetic practice guiding Hegemann's

[190] Helene Hegemann, in Kate Connolly, 'Helene Hegemann: "There's no such thing as originality, just authenticity"', *The Observer*, 24 June 2012, accessed 7 January 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jun/24/helene-hegemann-axolotl-novelist-interview?INTCMP=SRCH.

[191] The two approaches to the way sources are acknowledged in both the English and German editions stem from the underlying differences that predicate the two legal systems within which the novels were published; civil law that favours author's moral rights in Germany, and common law in the U.K. The latter traditionally lacks provisions for extensive protection of author's rights of personality and recognises moral right as alienable, i.e. allowing authors to weave their rights.

creativity. The reconceptualisation of the appendix potentially misplaces the novel as a result, removes it from the creative frame of the twenty-first-century approaches to iteration as a creative practice, heavily rooted in the Internet culture, with its inherent permissiveness to draw from a range of materials ('I steal from everywhere'), a culture of all-encompassing 're-gestures.'[192]

Hegemann's case was settled out of court and surfaced as a result of a media response rather than as legal precedent. However, the updated edition points to a very characteristic and pervasive thinking about originality and creativity in which legal and popular opinions seem to converge. These remain in a paradoxical opposition to the familiar, ubiquitous 'copy-paste' gestures, rejected and condemned when applied in what is understood as a traditional creative context. Practices of reproducing and repurposing find their manifestations in literary texts that assume a particularly unacceptable place in the popular cultural conscience, if applied as outlets for acts of authorship. Authorship and originality conceptualised as such are always inevitably associated with expressions of a Romantic genius, a paradigm in stark opposition to the increasingly prominent figure of a writer as a remixer engaging in iterative rather than derivative gestures. It is a shift in the understanding of the familiar paradigms that is necessary to reconceptualise them for the Iterative turn, opening space for experimentation and change, for practices that unsettle the familiar categories and trigger a shift in creative thinking. This dynamic reverberates clearly when Colting's and Hegemann's approaches to writing are juxtaposed. The difference between thinking behind the two projects resides, I suggest, in the authors' approaches towards framing their practices. While it is hard to say whether Colting's is an iconoclastic gesture, or, perhaps, an ignorant one, Hegemann positions her work firmly within a clearly defined avant-garde framework and in the context of the contemporary digital culture. As such, Hegemann's novel pertains to postproduction aesthetics while Colting's, with his reliance on rhetoric of parodic rewriting, so prominent in his defence, repeats the all too familiar logic of postmodernism. Colting's is an instance of metafictional writing through, Hegemann's is a strikingly different project. What the two have in common, however, is the context of the mainstream, commercial publishing that emerges as synonymous with an inherent impossibility of subversion. The related publishing practices applied in both cases as means of inscribing the novels into an established legal framework – including the appendix in Hegemann's case, incorporating a new cover blurb in Colting's – are indicative of the indiscriminate and narrow scope of legal thinking. In a typically avant-garde manner, the space for the proliferation of iterative gestures can only

[192] Goldsmith, 'The Bounce'.

emerges on the fringes of the legal and publishing apparatus, in works such as Place's or Morris's, engaging with the kinds of writing that, as Nick Thurston puts it, 'happen on the outside of literature (and other forms of knowledge).'[193]

Thurston's statement is a description of a conceptual framework behind the work of IAM, Information as Material, an independent publisher based in York, U.K., run by Thurston and Simon Morris, and a publisher of Morris's *Getting Into Jack Kerouac's Head*. But, I suggest, IAM's publishing praxis can be seen as a manifestation of the broader dynamics of the Iterative turn, and Thurston's statement a framework particularly fitting in the context of my juxtaposition of mainstream and avant-garde publishing today. IAM's work is illustrative of what I see as a characteristically iterative thinking, concerned, among others, with the possibilities of text in 'the ever-accelerating floods of textual over-production in an always already digital age.'[194] As Thurston explains, IAM is interested in the exploration of what Rachel Malik calls 'the horizon of publishable'[195] to develop an alternative model of 'publishing as praxis,' one that can accommodate writing by alternative, iterative means:

> Working towards a model of publishing as praxis has depended on carrying over these relatively horizontal, unstable and unprofitable principles for collective work into the practice of another kind of editorship. The result is that information as material has a focused and centred editorial collective that holds open [...] a space for a peculiar kind of writing [...]. Information as material is a [...] vehicle that enables a certain kind of unconventional but highly literate writer to write books rather than just texts – i.e., to implicate the process of reproduction in the conscious process of artistic production (what we commonly call composition).[196]

In other words, in the context of publishing as praxis, attitudes to publishing and creativity converge; here attitudes become form. In Thurston's model of literary production, reproduction becomes an essence of an artwork, 'a precedent of artistic production,' [197] to question and negate the traditional production-reproduction paradigms and models of authorship, and, instead, to 'explore an understanding of composition as process of reproduction-as-production.' [198] This approach, in an

[193] Nick Thurston, 'Publishing as Praxis of conceptualist reading performances', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 6.3 (2013), 422.
[194] Thurston, 'Publishing', 422.
[195] Rachel Malik, 'Fixing Meaning: Intertextuality, Interface, and the Horizons of the Publishable', *Radical Philosophy* 124 (2004), cited in Thurston, 'Publishing', 422.
[196] Thurston, 'Publishing', 422.
[197] Ibid, 423.
[198] Ibid.

inherently iterative fashion, 'exaggerates the collapse of authorship as an original creative act into an authorial act constituted by its reproducibility.'[199]

This is a model of writing that assumes iteration as a creative paradigm, one that mainstream publishing cannot conceptualise or accommodate. Thurston sees self-publishing as an alternative that allows for writing on the margins and against the normative framework. But it is not an act of self-publishing itself that is key here, but rather the commitment to a publishing gesture that is open to and allows for iterative thinking. This possibility of iteration is inscribed in Thurston's understanding of self-publishing as a means of reconceptualising the status of the self in publishing, and hence a change in the notion of the author. 'In this model,' Thurston explains, 'the self takes a responsibility for working to produce a different kind of publishable text and a different culture of publication, and it does so from outside the mainstream as a positive choice.'[200] Unlike vanity presses, self-publishing as understood by IAM is an avant-garde project, operating on the fringes of the mainstream publishing industry to explore the possibilities of subverting and unsettling the familiar categories of literary production. While Hegemann, even if writing as a self-consciously avant-garde, postproduction author, remains conditioned by the norms of publishability, Place or Morris operate on the outside of the normative framework, in a space where the attitudes so characteristic for the Iterative turn manifest themselves most explicitly. At the core of the turn conceptualised as such is an interrogation of the limits of creativity and the possibility of modifying questions of authoriality. As a result of the turn towards iteration the questions shifts, as Thurston puts it,

> from 'who wrote that text?' to 'who is taking responsibility for that text?' It explores the productive potential of the literary author as a self-subject [...] by asking for, of, and about a different kind of 'who' – a who whose new responsibility is also expressed by the change of tense between the two questions, which drags retrospection back into present action.[201]

This understanding of writing, authorship, and publishing emerges as a space where two models of thinking about iteration converge; where a certain propensity to repeat earlier attitudes and aesthetic paradigms translates into a related creative form. Viewed as such, the limit of iterability seems to reside only in the limit of the publishable.

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[199] Ibid, 425.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid, 426.

1.7. THE ITERATIVE TURN: WHEN ATTITUDES BECOME FORM

It is worth returning to Salinger's *Catcher* to discuss this divergent dynamic not just in law and literature but also in mainstream and small press, avant-garde publishing, the latter seen as a space where possibilities of exploring iterative thinking are particularly potent (avant-garde, is in the end, a copyright loophole, to return to Goldsmith). Perhaps because of Salinger's reluctance to engage in the contemporary iterative culture and because of his self-proclaimed, and now legally prescribed, status as a singular, Romantic, author-genius, his *Catcher* now exists in an extensive web of iterative aesthetics, with *60 Years Later* available as only one example. Worth mentioning here is Richard Prince's 2011 project engaging with Salinger's novel in a radical appropriation gesture. As an act that not only manifests the iterative creative attitude but also serves as an explicit commentary on copyright constraints and Judge Batts's rulings in both Prince and Salinger cases, *The Catcher in the Rye*, a novel by Richard Prince (2011) is a reproduction of Salinger's, presented as Prince's. Prince's *Catcher* is a facsimile reproduction of the first edition of Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) [Figure 4]. The two volumes are identical, only the author's name is replaced on the front cover and the reproduced dust jacket does not include Salinger's photo. The text originally printed on Salinger's cover is also retained in Prince's *Catcher,* with Prince's name printed instead of Salinger's. The cover reads: 'Anyone who has read Richard Prince's New Yorker stories, particularly *A Perfect Day for Bananafish, Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut, The Laughing Man, and For Esmé–with Love and Squalor,* will not be surprised by the fact that his first novel is full of children.'[202] Here, the act of appropriation turns into a more comprehensive gesture of complete expropriation; what is repurposed is not only this particular book but the entirety of Salinger's oeuvre, his complete authorial persona.

[202] Richard Prince, *The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: American Place, 2011), back cover.

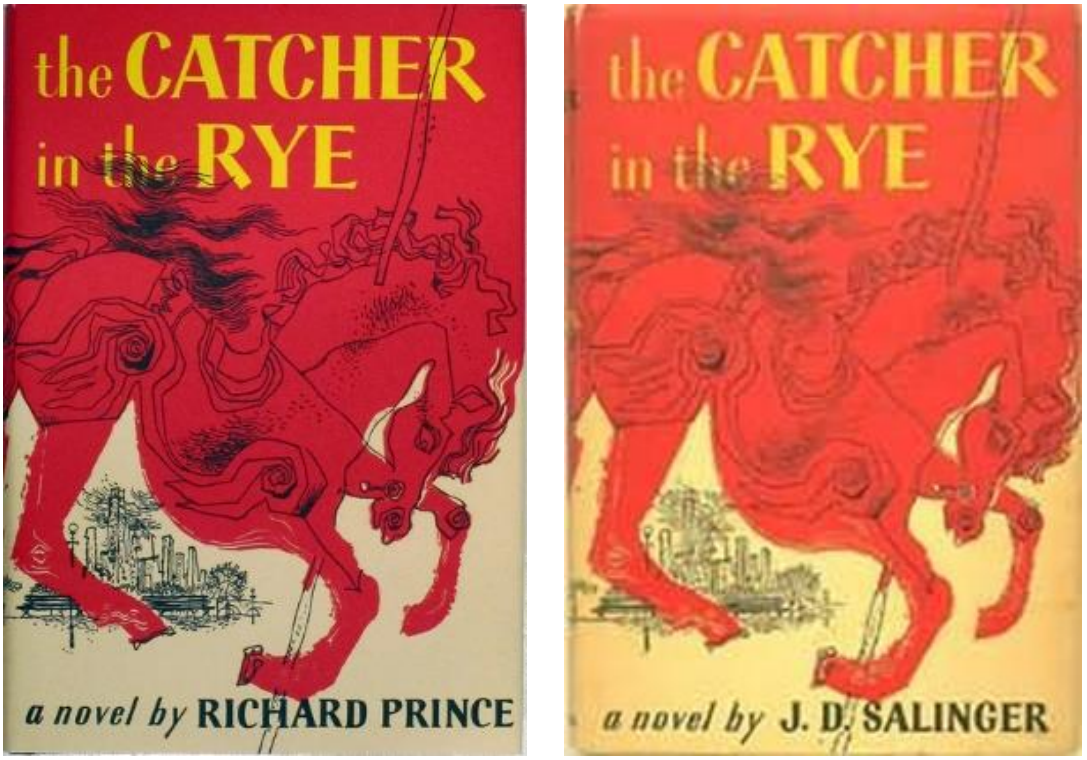

FIGURE 4: RICHARD PRINCE, *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* (2011) AND J.D. SALINGER, *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* (1951)

Even the design of Prince's publisher's logo mimics that of Little, Brown and Co.'s, the publisher of the 1951 edition he appropriates. In fact, a comparison of the two logos is telling here. The logo used in Prince's *Catcher* is, in fact, the new Little, Brown creation, only adopted by the publisher in 2009 rather than its 1951 equivalent.[203] Prince's, then, is an appropriation of a later reprint of the 1951 edition, rather than of the original first, as Prince suggests. The 1951 Little, Brown and Co. logo, as it appeared in the original edition of Salinger's novel, differed significantly from the one used today and does not feature in Prince's volume [compare Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7]. What Prince must have appropriated as his source is a 2010 reprint of the 1951 edition, available as part of a J.D. Salinger box set of four books, a widely accessible mass market publication [Figure 7].[204]

[203] A Brief History of Little, Brown, and Co., *Little, Brown and Company*, accessed 20 may 2013, http://www.littlebrown.com/175.html.
[204] The copyright page of this edition of *The Catcher* reads: 'Published by Little, Brown and Company, July 1951, Text reset September 2010.' I am indebted to Eric Doeringer for sharing information about the edition used in his *60 Years Later* project that made tracing Prince's source possible.

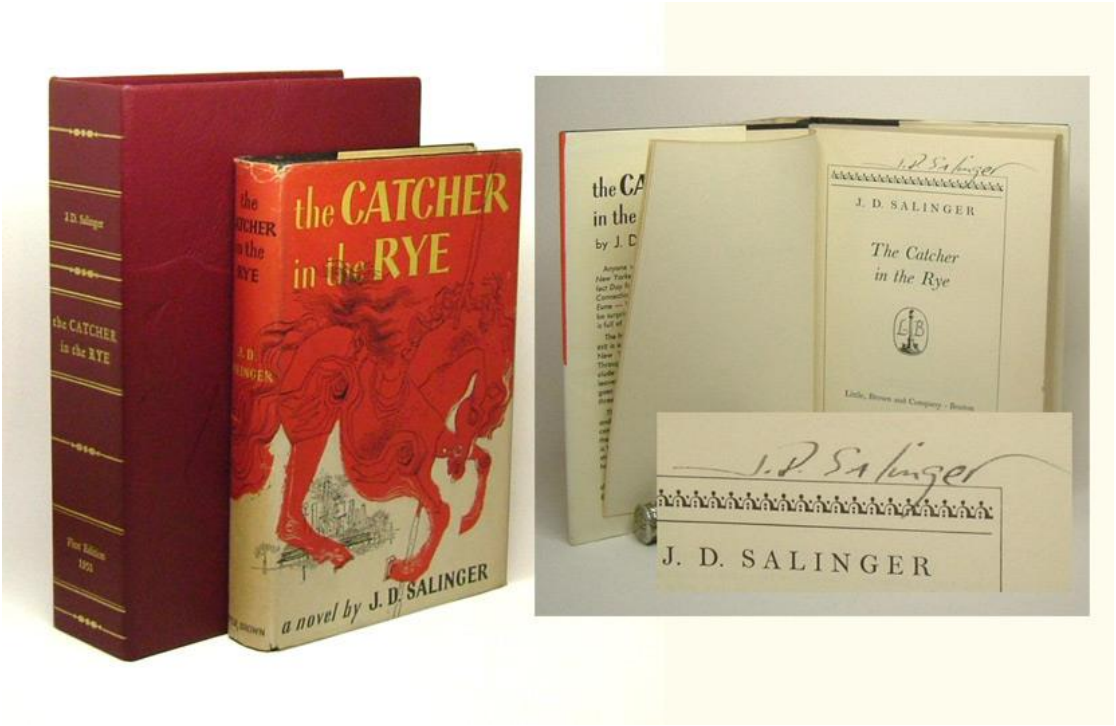

FIGURE 5: J.D. SALINGER, *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*, FIRST EDITION, 1951 AND ITS TITLE PAGE, WITH THE ORIGINAL 1951 LITTLE, BROWN, AND CO. LOGO

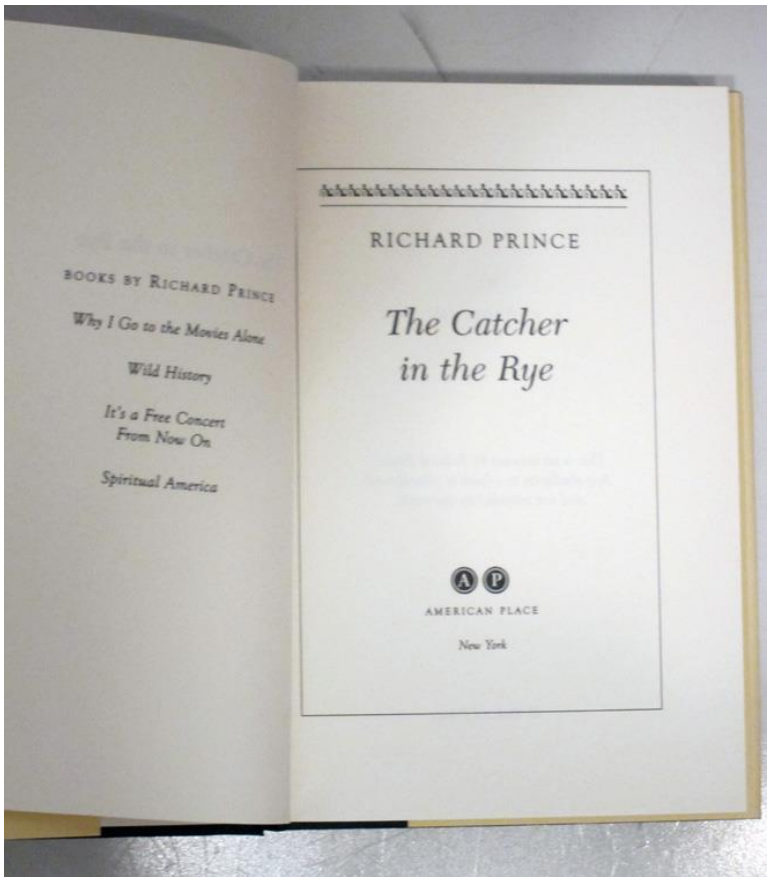

FIGURE 6: THE TITLE PAGE OF RICHARD PRINCE'S *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* (2011), APPROPRIATING THE NEW, 2009, LITTLE, BROWN, AND CO. LOGO

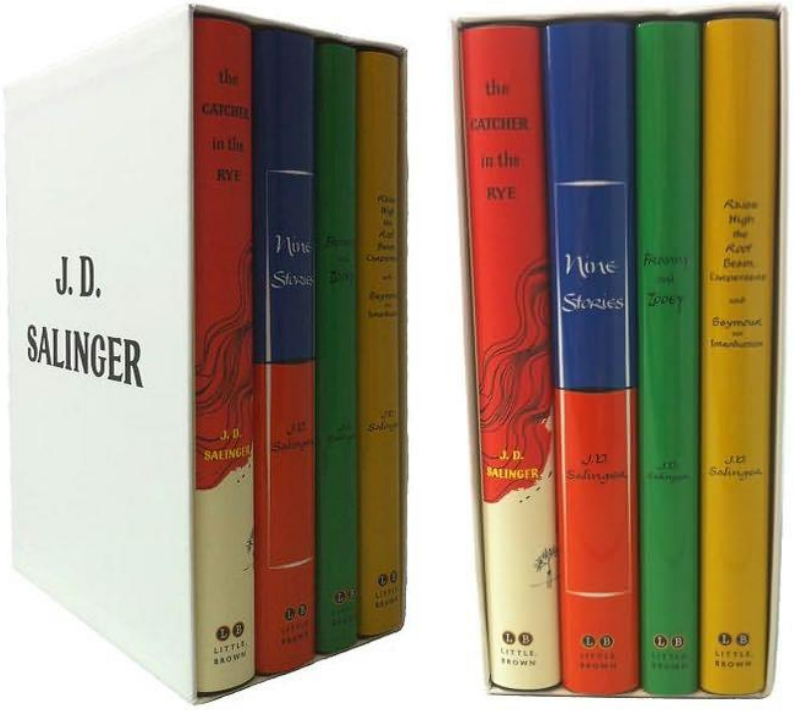

FIGURE 7: J.D. SALINGER BOX SET, 2010, INCLUDING *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* 2010 REPRINT OF THE 1951 EDITION, WITH THE NEW, 2009, LITTLE, BROWN , AND CO. LOGO

This is a telling gesture, evocative of Prince's broader attitude towards creativity and authorship, overtly devaluing Salinger's volume, foregrounding the widespread tendency to fetishise first editions and this particular novel itself, as well the celebrity status both Salinger and Prince enjoy. As Prince puts it:

> that [*The Catcher in the Rye*] is just a favorite book. I'm aware of the implications. It's kind of the Disneyland of book publishing. You don't mess with images from Disney. You don't near it. And [*The*] *Catcher in the Rye* is also on lockdown; it's almost become an institution, it's very sacred. It's very rare to get a great first-edition copy.[205]

But Prince is an institution himself. In his hands, a mass-produced reprint of Salinger's novel turns into a highly coveted and expensively priced art object, turning the critique of the fetish of the book into a self-conscious statement on the fetishisation of Richard Prince, the artist, and the art market more broadly. Here distinctions between high art and mass market production are blurred, an approach reflected in the sales of Prince's *Catcher*. Printed in 500 copies, Prince's 'novel' retailed for $65, with some copies sold for a discounted $40 in Central Park, New York, from a provisional stall set up by Prince [Figure 8]; further copies marketed for

[205] Richard Prince, Interview by Kim Gordon, *Interview*, accessed 07 June 2014, http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/kim-gordon-richard-prince/# .

a few hundred dollars, with signed books sold for $2,000 and more, these price brackets set to reflect on and double the value assigned to Salinger's first editions, signed and unsigned respectively – first editions of which Prince's volumes were not even a reprint.[206]

The only addition to repurposed source material here is Prince's copyright disclaimer: 'This is an artwork by Richard Prince. Any similarity to a book is coincidental and not intended by the artist. © Richard Prince.'[207] By breaking all the copyright rules, Prince, at the same time, abides by the rules of copyright. His copyright note recognises the work's derivative nature but immediately posits itself as intentionally transformative to unambiguously refute potential accusations of a copyright breach. Prince here juggles the copyright rhetoric in a manner evocative of case law, pointing, it would seem, to its subjective, ambivalent processes and its inability to control the current state of iterative aesthetic affairs.

FIGURE 8: JAMES FREY WITH A COPY OF RICHARD PRINCE'S *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* IN CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK

Eric Doeringer's *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye* (2012) is another useful example, a project that appropriates both a specific work of appropriation – Colting's *60 Years Later* – and an appropriation gesture in Prince's *Catcher*. Evoking

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[206] Three years after its publication, copies (unsigned) of Prince's *Catcher* sell for $1,200.00 [abebooks.com, accessed 8 August 2014, http://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?an=Richard+Prince&sts=t&tn=Catcher+in+the+Rye,], while copies of the first edition, first printing of Salinger's novel start at $1,800.00. First edition, later 1951 reprints start at as little as $150 [abebooks.com, accessed 8 August 2014 http://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?an=Salinger&bi=0&bx=off&ds=30&fe=on&kn=Little+Brown+1st+printing&recentlyadded=all&sortby=17&tn=Catcher+in+the+Rye&x=50&y=11].

[207] Prince, *The Catcher*, copyright page.

Prince's 2011 project and referencing the *Salinger* v. *Colting* case, Doeringer's is a reprint of Colting's novel. It is an unauthorised appropriation of an unauthorised sequel. But, as Doeringer's copyright page reads, this is 'an unauthorised sequel to Richard Prince's appropriation of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Any similarity to the book is coincidental and not intended by the artist. © Eric Doeringer.'[208] Doeringer's work might look like Colting's volume, it might be a copy of Colting's text, but it is, Doeringer claims, an appropriation of Prince's piece. Prince's influence is not purely conceptual, as acknowledged in this disclaimer – itself iterative, an appropriation of Prince's disclaimer, printed in his *Catcher* – but manifested in a number of paratextual references. The publisher's logo that Doerringer uses, for example, is an appropriation of Prince's appropriation of Little, Brown, and Co.'s logo, used to replace the black bird of Windupbird, Colting's publishers [Figure 11]. All references to Salinger in Colting's novel are substituted for reference to Prince, e.g. Colting's dedication, 'to J.D. Salinger, the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life,' reads 'to Richard Prince, the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life,' in Dorringer's work. The same logic informs the appropriation of the text on the back cover; Colting's examination of a relationship between J.D. Salinger and his character is transformed here into a meditation on Prince and his most famous character [Figure 9 and Figure 10].

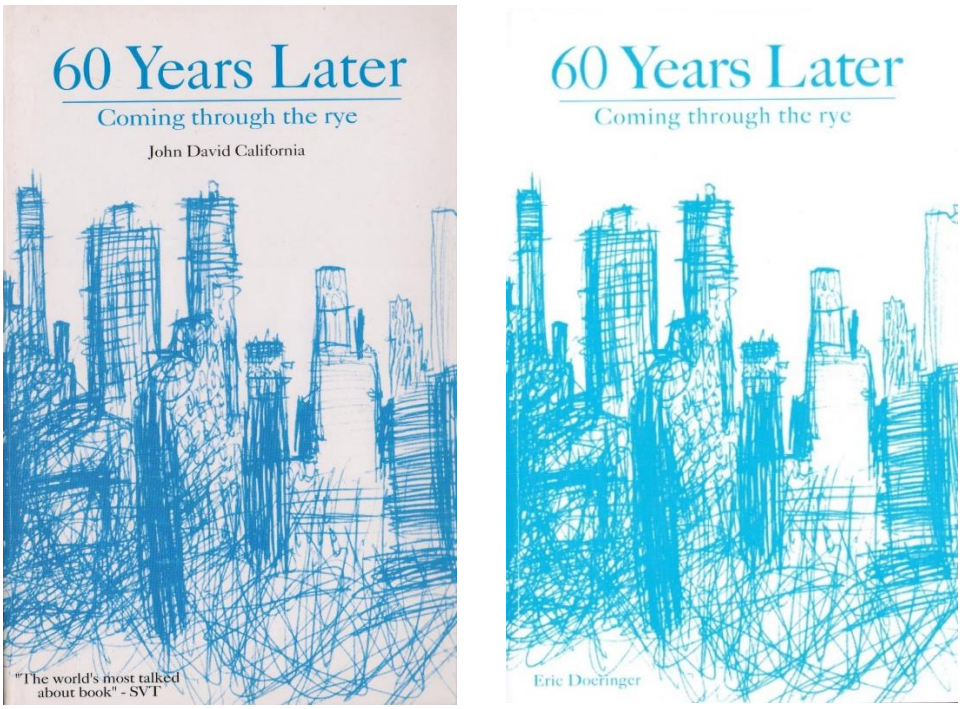


FIGURE 9: J.D. CALIFORNIA, *60 YEARS LATER* AND ERIC DOERINGER, *60 YEARS LATER*, FRONT COVERS

[208]Eric Doeringer, *60 Years Later : Coming Through the Rye* (New York : Copycat Publications, 2012).

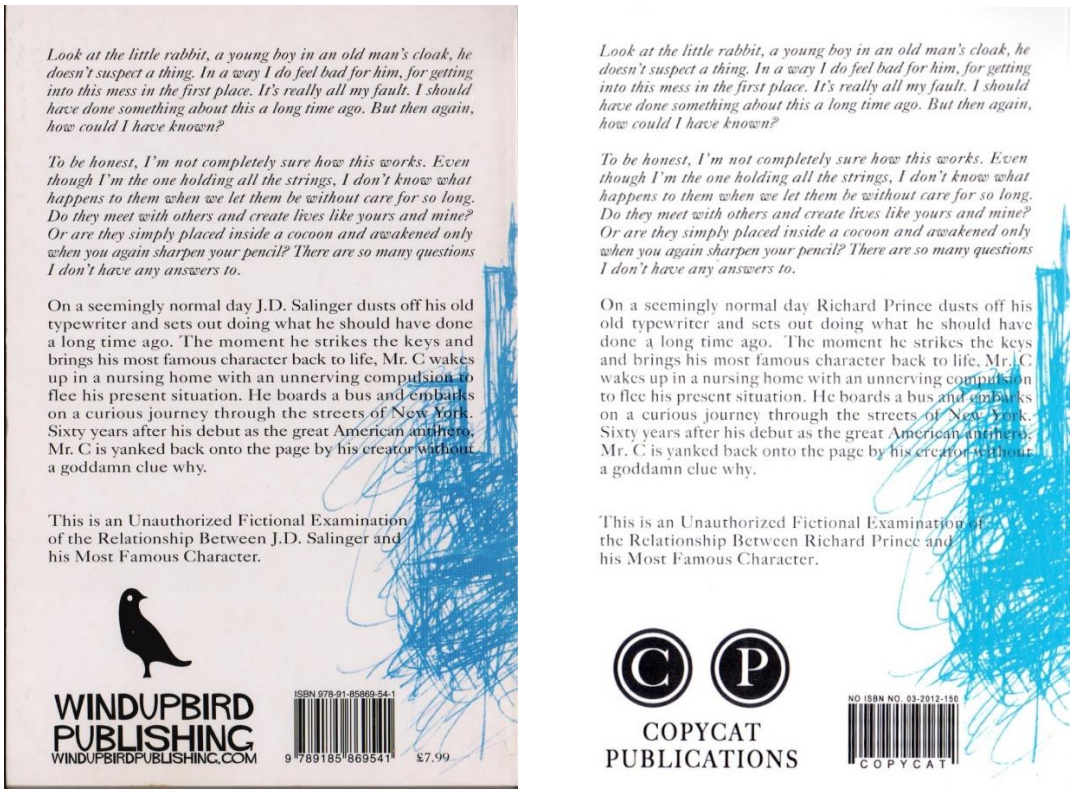


FIGURE 10: J.D. CALIFORNIA, *60 YEARS LATER* AND ERIC DOERINGER, *60 YEARS LATER*, BACK COVERS

Conflating the discourse and symbols used on the dust jackets of Colting's novel and Prince's work, and repurposing both in a single act of appropriation of appropriation, Doeringer's *60 Years* is illustrative of the dynamic of authorship that is realised in a familiar Barthesian gesture, where each text assumes a form of an extensive tissue of quotations only reconceptualised for the contemporary culture of hyperbolic iterative gestures. Here, the abundance of texts, more or less interesting, the proliferation of copies of copies, assumes a quality of a creative gesture. The complex structure of appropriated authorship that Doeringer constructs – is his *60 Years* an appropriation of Prince's, Salinger's, Colting's work? All of them, only some of them? – emerges as a particularly evocative manifestation of 'the voice that loses its origin' when the new, appropriated 'writing begins.'[209] Reading Doeringer via Barthes should not be seen as a rather overfamiliar exercise in theory of reading and writing after poststructuralism (even if its echoes are apparent), but, I suggest, a means of drawing attention to legal categories of originality. As mentioned earlier, originality in legal terms is defined in relation to the author as origin and takes no interest in in novel or creative thinking. But, if such an approach to writing assumes

[209] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 141. Hereafter DOA.

the iterative form, where writing begins when the voice loses its origin, then the legal category of originality cannot apply. Without an 'origin' it is impossible to speak of originality in the legal sense. Such an approach to thinking about the source text and its authorship is a clear manifestation of the contemporary iterative thinking with a propensity to exchange, reuse and appropriate material regardless of where it came from. The complexity of the structure of attribution and appropriation in Doeringer's work seems to echo potential challenges of assignation of authorship in the postproduction context, where texts are constantly copied, pasted, deleted, reblogged, and retweeted, disseminated in a manner that often removes the copy from the origin and, hence, makes attribution a challenge. But here attribution and recognition of the origin are also not a primary concern. As such, Doeringer's is not simply a yet another appropriation piece but, I suggest, a work that emerges as a manifestation of a particular creative attitude, one that marks a tendency in creative practice in which very specific thinking about paradigms of authorship and creativity is expressed in a radical form, where attitudes become form.[210]

[210] My description of contemporary iterative gestures as a manifestation of attitudes that become form draws on a title of perhaps the most formative exhibitions of conceptual art, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, curated by Harald Szeeman and exhibited in 1969 in Kunsthale Bern, Germany. Szeeman's exhibit was key is reconceptualising the role of the curator (a trajectory relevant to my discussion of author as curator in Chapter 3). It took particular interest in elevating artistic process over product and in exhibition practice as a linguistic medium. It proved foundational both as an event and a conceptual model. As Scott Burton explains, 'the exhibition gather[ed] a number of artists whose works have very little in common yet also a great deal in common. The similarities are less stylistic than intellectual. […] The difference between painting and sculpture has gone (following that between poetry and prose in verbal art) […] art and ideas are becoming indistinguishable […] words are looked at, pictures are read, poems are 'events', plastic or visual art is 'performed'' [Scott Burton, 'Notes on the New', *Live in your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, exhibition catalogue, 22 March 1969 – 27 April 1969 (Kunsthale Bern), non. pag]. It was the particular attitude, manifested in the new art of the time, that was key to formulating the form of the exhibit. A similar conceptual gesture, I suggest, is being reiterated today, at the contemporary Iterative turn, where an attitude inflicted by an inherently simulacral culture of 'copy-paste' manifests itself in proliferation of iterative creative forms. Interestingly, that approach towards expressing contemporary aesthetic sensibilities through acts of iteration has found its manifestation in a contemporary iteration of Szeeman's exhibit. Curated by Germano Catelan and exhibited in Venice in 2013, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013* reconstructed the original exhibit to posit it as both a copy of the 1969 show and an original exhibit in its own right. Catelan's gesture is significant here as a means of appropriating the dictum of Szeeman's exhibit as a framework for discussing contemporary Iterative turn. Repeated in 2013, Catelan's *Attitudes* transformed Szeeman's *Attitudes* into a readymade, a source text like any other, that can be repurposed and recontextualised in space and time. As a project particularly relevant to my thinking about iteration, it points to an implicit currency of the 1960s gesture as it remerges at the Iterative turn.

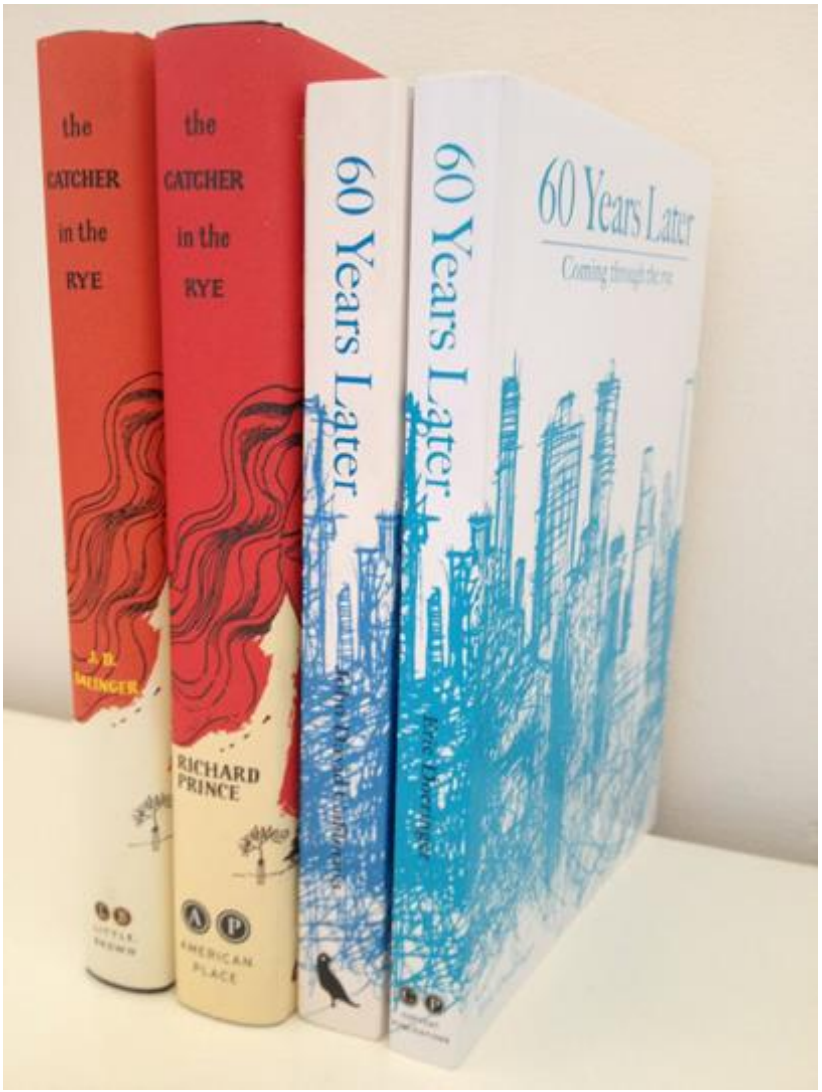


FIGURE 11: SPINES OF SALINGER'S *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* (1951/2010), PRINCE'S *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* (2011), COLTING'S *60 YEARS LATER* (2009), AND DOERINGER'S *60 YEARS LATER* (2012), SHOWING THEIR RESPECTIVE LOGOS

Prince's and Doeringer's appropriation projects have not, to date, proven controversial from the copyright's point view. And neither has Vanessa Place's Twitter-based attempt at copying every single word of Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. All three are potentially much more problematic than Colting's or Randall's attempts at writing through, unquestionably derivative, openly unoriginal, and not transformative at all. There might be a significant market value attached to both Salinger's and Mitchell's novels (and the parodies or sequels that follow) as widely regarded and recognised cultural capital, but the unlikely economic potential of radical avant-garde gestures keeps these three works outside of copyright's scope and interest. Prince's *Catcher* might be selling for a high price, but its marginal appeal and lack of mass market value place it, from copyright's point of view, alongside other marginal works, of little interest to copyright holders. From the literary standpoint,

the two legal cases discussed in this chapter remain rooted in the same discourse that dominated postmodern discussions of appropriation in literature, focusing on parody and pastiche as key notions, reliant on appropriated fragments, conscious and overt commentary on the source and marked differences between the appropriated text and its intertext. Morris, Place, Doeringer, and Prince all engage in more radical literary appropriations, their hyperbolic transcriptions and retweeted novels reformulate the nature of the engagement with the appropriated text as governed by the dynamic of the postproduction landscape. These are instances of Federman's pla[y]giarim,[211] rather than manifestation of plagiarism, examples of a game, a performance for the Iterative turn, and should be treated as such. 'The challenge for the twenty-first-century writers is,' as Stephen Voyce comments, 'how to create aesthetic objects that problematize, baffle and defy the enclosures of intellectual property regimes.'[212] Novels such as Hegemann's, and experimental avant-garde projects such as Morris's, Place's, Doeringer's, should all be seen as a response to the challenge that Voyce describes, as manifestations of the same iterative thinking evocative of a shifting attitude to paradigms of creativity and authorship. However, because of publishing limitations driven by legal constraints, such subversive gestures cannot be fully explored in the context of mainstream publishing, by means of engagement with more traditional literary forms, where conservative thinking about models of authorship dominates. Any attempt at experimenting with acts of iterative writing in such a context becomes subject to formal constraints that detract from their critical, creative potential. As such, it is within the avant-garde circles rather than through cases such as *Salinger* and *Suntrust* that the contemporary paradigms of authorship and creativity can be interrogated, while avenues for the exploration of the possibilities of alternative copyright thinking open up.

But can these renegotiated modes of authorship that are currently emerging fit into the copyright framework in its current form? These practices emerge on the fringes of copyright driven by a certain sense of permissiveness to reuse and reappropriate that the contemporary postproduction landscape seems to encourage. Voyce characteristically associates these contemporary uncreative practices with the rise to prominence of decentralised, non-proprietary modes of authorship and information dissemination, propagated and supported by open source software, the Free Culture movement and increasing implementation of creative commons agreements. 'Like open source programmers,' Voyce observes, 'those poets and artists

[211] Raymond Federman, 'Imagination as Plagiarism [An Unfinished Paper]', *New Literary History,* 7.3 (1976), 565.
[212] Voyce, 420.

who make such tactics the hallmark of their creative practice had had to organise activist networks in opposition to intellectual property regimes.'[213] With the rise to prominence of platforms such as UbuWeb (an open access repository of all things avant-garde, curated by Goldsmith) and publishers such as IAM, the discourse of creative commons pervades the avant-garde literary scene today. The poetic economy of no economy, hence, emerges as a privilege that ensures creative freedom to experiment and subvert, relying on accessibility and online visibility as tools for dissemination of works created on the fringes of the creative establishment; 'if it doesn't exist on the internet,' says Goldsmith, 'it does not exist.'[214]

If it does exist online, however, it proves everyone's to repurpose, copy, paste and appropriate, so it would seem. The increasing sense of entitlement to appropriate, a rather utopian, communal sense of non-ownership that pervades digital thinking today, increasingly ties in with a sense of permissiveness to do so in the creative circles. As an example, in 2012 Don Share, the Editor of *Poetry* magazine, one of the most established periodicals in the poetry world, tweeted a link to a blog called *AMF*.[215] The platform was devoted to turning the entire 2012 (centenary) run of the magazine issues into works of experimental poetry, erasing, translating, collaging, turning language of *Poetry* into the language of code, among other iterative methods [Figure 12]. Share's approach can be seen as a manifestation of a broader cultural tendency. The model put forward by contemporary avant-gardes discussed here requires a relinquishment of ownership, repudiation of authorship to then enable subsequent acts of authorship with a *différance* – a trajectory that makes appropriation's reliance on acts of expropriation particularly explicit. But such a framework also serves as a destabilising mechanism. The avant-garde projects discussed in this and the following chapters put into question the dominant, normative ideas of authorship and as a result interrogate the relationship between author and text traditionally understood, with the widespread tendency to foreground the illusory, utopian view of originality, as defined by legal doctrine. However, as Goldsmith observes, 'by opposing creativity as commonly accepted — in a sense by constructing a negative notion of creativity — perhaps we can breathe new life into

[213] Ibid, 409.
[214] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'If it doesn't exist online, it doesn't exist', 27 September 2005, *Electronic Poetry Centre*, accessed 9 August 2014, http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/if_it_doesnt_exist.html.
[215] Don Share, Twitter post, 6 May 2012, https://twitter.com/Don_Share.

this practice.'[216] This attitude informs text and practices discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

FIGURE 12: *POETRY* MAGAZINGE, JANUARY 2012 COVER AND ITS ERASURE FROM *AMF* BLOG

[216] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Petty Theft: Kenny G Gives A's for Unoriginality', interview with Anne Henochowicz, *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 18 November 2004, accessed 9 August 2014, http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/goldsmith/goldsmith_petty_theft.pdf.

CHAPTER 2

ERASURE

PART 1: WRITING UNDER ERASURE

On their website, alongside standard sections informing their readers about authors they work with and published books, Wave Books – an independent press based in Seattle, WA – also include a tab called 'Erasures'. 'Erasure,' as the website reads, 'is a process by which you can take any text and from it, create a poem.'[217] A flash application included on the Wave Books webpage enables textual production by such means. Set up as an erasure engine, encouraging Wave Books readers to generate their own texts, the application offers a number of sources to be edited and erased, including, among others, fragments of Henry James's *The Bundle of Letters*, Aristophanes's *Clouds,* and an excerpt from an anonymous *History of Insects*. As an example, the following fragment of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is available:

> The negative effect on feeling(unpleasantness) is pathological, like every influence on feeling and like every feeling generally. But as an effect of the consciousness of the moral law, and consequently in relation to a supersensible cause, namely, the subject of pure practical reason which is the supreme lawgiver, this feeling of a rational being affected by inclinations is called humiliation (intellectual self-depreciation); but with reference to the positive source of this humiliation, the law, it is respect for it. There is indeed no feeling for this law; but inasmuch as it removes the resistance out of the way, this removal of an obstacle is, in the judgement of reason, esteemed equivalent to a positive help to its causality. Therefore this feeling may also be called a feeling of respect for the moral law, and for both reasons together a moral feeling.

FIGURE 13: WAVE BOOKS ERASURE ENGINE, SAMPLE SOURCE TEXT (IMMANUEL KANT, *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*)

Subject to the erasure process, it generates poems such as 'Law of Reason' by KB:

[217] Erasures, *Wave Books*, accessed 11th July 2012, http://erasures.wavepoetry.com.

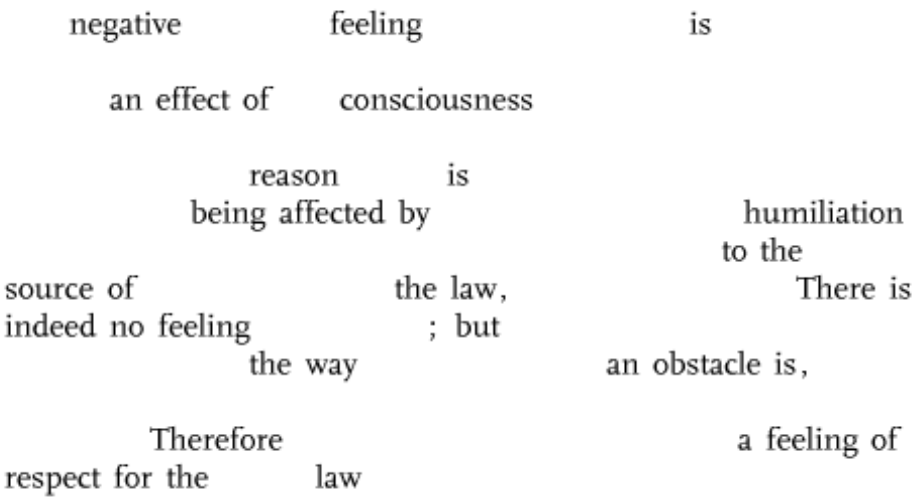


FIGURE 14: 'LAW OF REASON', A SAMPLE ERASURE POEM, WAVE BOOKS ERASURE ENGINE

or 'Kantian Love Poem' by a user ShakM (with 167 other uploaded to date):

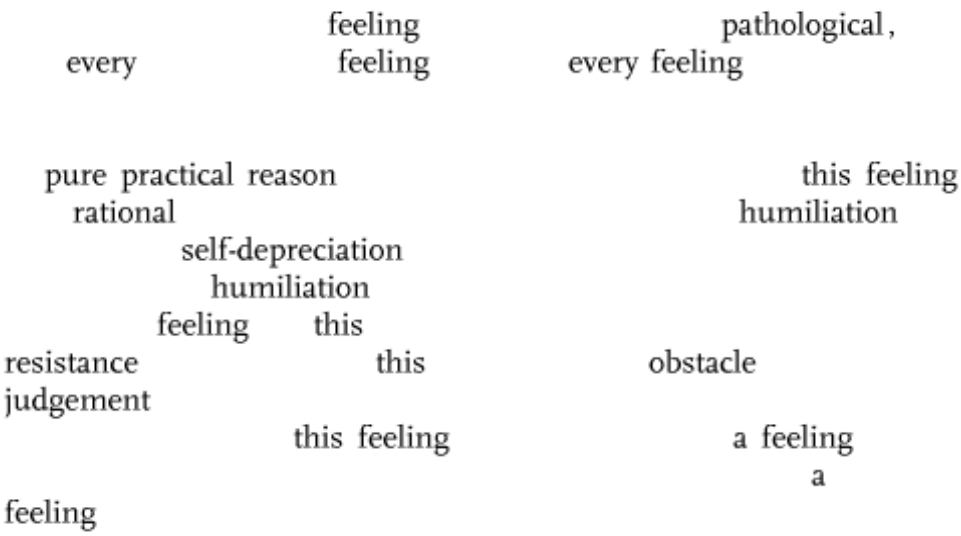


FIGURE 15: 'KANTIAN LOVE POEM', WAVE BOOKS ERASURE ENGINE

The archive currently comprises 4117 poems.[218] The earliest submission dates back to March 2006 and coincides with Wave Books's publication of Mary Ruefle's *A Little White Shadow* (2006). Ruefle's book is a poetry volume and an art project at the same time, created by Tippexing out significant sections of an obscure nineteenth-century book of the same title. The publication is a facsimile reprint of Ruefle's manuscript, preserving the typography and the unusual design. In the erasure process, the entire volume is subject to appropriation, including the title page, with the original author's name whited out and Ruefle's handwritten in its place [

[218] Figure as of November 9, 2014.

Figure 16]. While much could be said about the poetics of Ruefle's text, what I am primarily interested in here is its form. Ruefle's commitment to erasure reflects its increasing prominence and popularity today. This chapter focuses on erasure as an iterative practice – a method that involves both acts of repetition and alteration of a source to create a new text – and presents it as an inherently contemporary form of writing that engages in questions that motivate changes in attitudes towards creativity at the Iterative turn. While the first part of the chapter sets out the premises of erasure in general, the second part is an attempt at arriving at an alternative model of authorship for thinking about erasure today. In my attempt at formulating a theory of the genre, I focus on instances of writing described here as 'documents under erasure' to suggest notions of memory and archivisation as a framework for defining erasure as a creative practice.

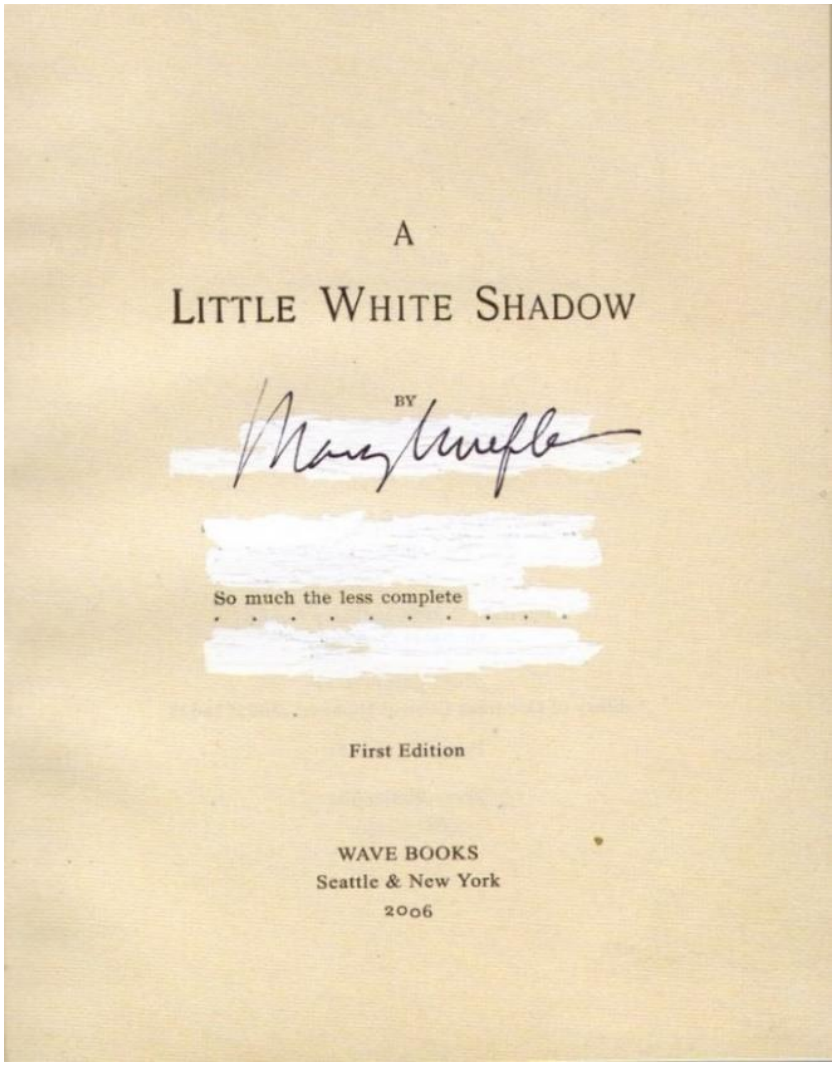


FIGURE 16: MARY RUEFLE, *A LITTLE WHITE SHADOW*, TITLE PAGE

2.1. ERASURE: THE THIRD MIND AESTHETICS

Although a form that speaks particularly explicitly to the current cultural moment, erasure has a literary history. The technique used to create *A Little White Shadow* brings to mind two earlier textual experiments, Tom Phillips's *A Humument* (1973)[219] and Ronald Johnson's *Radi os* (1977). Phillips's work is, as the author puts it, a treated document based on William Mallock's *A Human Document* (1893). In *A Humument*, pages of *A Human Document* are transformed. The original text is covered with images which obscure the content but leave a selection of words visible; words that create the text of *A Humument* [Figure 17]. Authorship here emerges as a manifestation of an interplay between the processes of reading and writing, an approach explicitly echoed in the Wave Books online app. Characteristic of the process of authoring by such means is a significant shift in form. An act of erasure transforms the familiar linearity of a book into an exploration into the possibilities of experimenting with the printed page. As Phillips himself described it: '[the] story is a non-linear narrative [...] a dispersed narrative with more than one possible order, more like a pack of cards than a continuous tale.'[220] The fragmented story of *A Human Document*, composed as a scrapbook of letters, journals, and memorabilia of two lovers is, in Phillips's hands, recreated as a new fragmented, non-linear, hypertext-like narrative, a story of Bill Toge, created in a process of an overtly discursive interplay between the text and its intertext, or, as *A Humument* reads, 'that odd broken novel [...] the narrative art of the third creation.'[221]

Phillips references William Burroughs's and Brion Gysin's concept of the Third Mind of collaboration here, an independent entity that arises from a friction between two inherently different sets of creative methods and aesthetic approaches:

> The Third Mind [...] represents the experimental stage. It is not the history of a literary collaboration but rather the complete fusion in a praxis of two subjectivities, two subjectivities that metamorphose into

[219] *A Humument* was initially only available in a 1973 exhibition edition, first published in a trade edition in 1980. It still enjoys such a double status. As a work of literature, it is currently available in its 5th paperback edition (published in 2012). As a visual arts piece, it remains widely exhibited. Examples include a recent *Life's Work* at MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art), which run in 2013-2014 and included over 1000 pages from the 1st as well as the most recent, 5th edition of *A Humument*. A selection of the original 1970 pages is currently archived at Tate Britain, classed as artworks and available in the Prints and Drawing room [see for example: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/phillips-no-title-p-271-p01526].

[220] Tom Phillips, 'Notes on A Humument', in *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), non pag.

[221] Tom Phillips, *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 5. Hereafter HTVN.

> a third; it is from this collusion that a new author emerges, an absent third person, invisible and beyond grasp, decoding the silence.[222]

A manifestation of Burroughs's and Gysin's thinking, authorship in *A Humument* should be understood as a product of this third subjectivity. The text is a hybrid creation of the abstract third person, writing, by analogy, a text that is a fusion of stories and sensibilities. As Phillips's comments:

> a hidden hero emerged from behind the columns of the text to interact with the novel's real protagonists, and to make a contrast to them in class and style. Mallock's first name was William. He does not look like someone you would call Bill, so this would be a good name for his commonplace alter ego. When I chanced on 'bill' it appeared next to the word 'together' and thus the distinctly downcast and blokeish name Bill Toge was born. It became a rule that Toge should appear on every page that included the words 'together' and 'altogether' (as indeed befits a doppelganger).[223]

This is writing characterised by a certain sense of reading between the lines, or, perhaps more accurately, against the lines, rather than as a result of a rejection and destruction of the source text and the book as an object. Seen as such, Phillips's method of treating the novel subsumes acts of repetition and removal at the same time, where the creative process is based on a conflation of the possibility inscribed in the iterability of a text and the aesthetics of alterity.

In *A Humument* the familiar models of narrativity are rejected, positioning it very firmly within the experimental arts and literary scene contemporaneous with Phillips's early experiments. Phillips's creative practice evokes, among others, works of Raymond Queneau (i.e. his *Cent mille milliards de poèmes/A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems* (1961) or *Exercises in Style* (1947)). His 'pack of cards' approach brings to mind Marc Saporta's *Composition No. 1* (1962) and B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), both examples of books in a box, comprising a set of loose pages. The act of erasing a page in the 1970s also conjures similar experiments in visual arts, with most prominent examples including Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953) [Figure 18] and Marcel Broodthaers's appropriation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Un Coup de Dés'/'A Throw of Dice' (1969) [Figure 19]. While Rauschenberg removes an image to create an erased work of art,[224] Broodthaers

[222] William S. Burroughs and Brian Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: A Saver Book/The Viking Press, 1978), 17-18.
[223] Phillips, 'Notes'.
[224] In his piece Rauschenberg restages an earlier DADA gesture, a performance in which André Breton erased lines of a picture immediately after Francis Picabia had drawn them (1920). The aesthetics of Broodthaers's blacked out page can be seen as a reference to Man Ray's 'Lautgedicht' (1924). 'Lautgedicht', a sound-poem, is composed of black bars only. These are of different length, implying the length of words they cover, and are organised in four stanzas. The acts of removing, erasing, and blacking out content in the mid-twentieth

works according to principles of remediation, transforming a work of literature into a work of art by means of erasure. Broodthaers's piece is an 'image', as a subtitle to the work reads, created by replacing lines of Mallarmé's poem under the same title with black blocks sized and organised in line with Mallarmé's instructions for its layout and font. As Johanna Drucker puts it, 'Broodthaers reduces "Un Coup de Dés" to its structure [...] he elevates the structure of the work to a concept worthy of study in its own right.'[225] Broodthaers's interest in the form rather than the content brings to the fore the propensity for working with a blank, erased space that seems to have emerged at the time.

FIGURE 17: TOM PHILLIPS, *A HUMUMENT* (2012), PAGE 4

century repeat the earlier avant-garde acts, immediately inscribing the erasure aesthetics into the history of the avant-gardes. Contemporary erasure can be seen as a continuation of the recurring engagement with such avant-garde gestures and a manifestation of avant-garde thinking for the postproduction moment. The possibility of reading iterative writing practices today as a manifestation of neo-neo-avant-garde aesthetics is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

[225] Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artist Books* (New York: Granary Books, 2004), 115.

FIGURE 18: ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, *ERASED DE KOONING DRAWING* (1953)

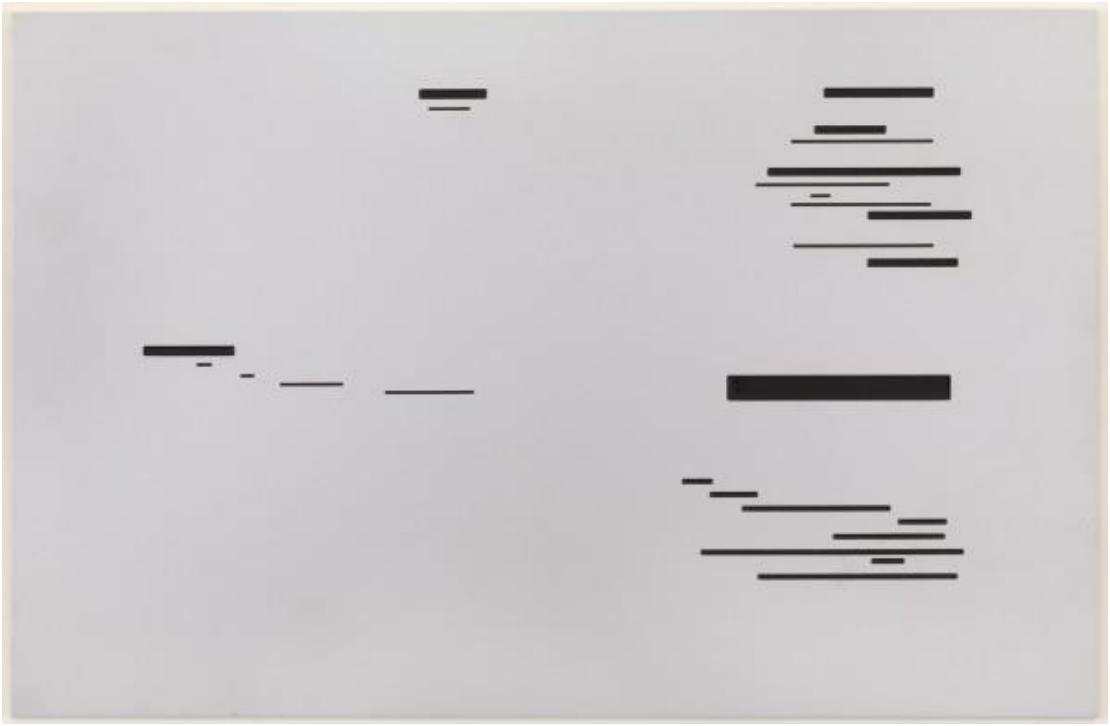


FIGURE 19: MARCEL BROODHAERS, ONE OF THE 12 PLATES OF *A THROW OF DICE* (1969)

Although a clear manifestation of an emergent aesthetic tendency, *A Humument* defies an unambiguous historical contextualisation. For Phillips, *A Humument* is a lifelong project, started in 1966 and still in progress today, currently available in its fifth edition, published in 2012. The work is constantly revised, defined by processes of iteration and alterity, with each edition offering a new rendering of the first publication. All subsequent versions of *A Humument* introduce distinct iterations of the original, 'changing now now,'[226] adapting the earlier treatments, frequently echoing the cultural moment against the backdrop of which each given adaptation of Mallock's text is created (e.g. the current 2012 volume references contemporary social media culture the events of 9/11) [Figure 17]. As a result of Phillips's ongoing treatement, each page of the original is gradually replaced by its altered version, in a multi-layered palimpsestic process of erasures upon erasure upon erasures, multiplying gaps as well as references, as if asking, after *A Humument*, 'is book game?'[227] The page here emerges as an unstable space of meaning, both visual and textual, while any possibility of its alteration is, as Dworkin suggests, always implied in the source text.[228] *A Humument*, as Phillips points out, has never ended, and as such, I suggest, could be treated as an exploration in the possibility of iteration

[226] HTVN, 158.
[227] Ibid, 257.
[228] Dworkin, *Reading*, 135.

as a creative project. The repetition of a text destroyed under erasure becomes a positive, productive force, or, as Paul de Man puts it, 'the unmaking of a construct' governed by a deconstructive implication of 'the possibility of rebuilding'[229] inscribed into a seemingly negative act. The model of creativity defined as such grows out of an assumption that 'the changes are the method.'[230]

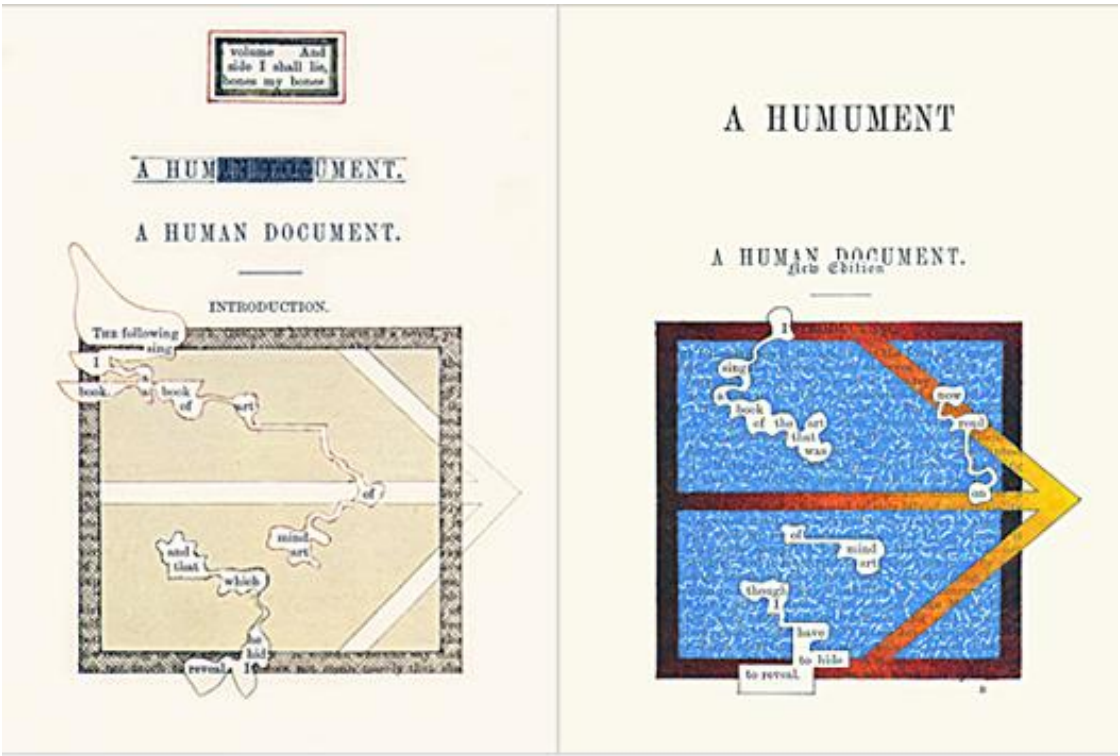


FIGURE 20: *A HUMUMENT*: PAGE 1 FROM 1973 EDITION AND FROM THE MOST RECENT, 2012 EDITION

Like *A Humument*, Ronald Johnson's *Radi os* is a text created by treating and adapting another text, a 'rewriting by excision'[231] of the first four books of the 1892 edition of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Unlike Phillips's project, an art book and a textual experiment at the same time, Johnson's places textuality at its core. *Radi os* emerges as a result of textual removal; the majority of its source is erased, while the remaining words and phrases form the body of the poem. As Steve McCafferey describes the process, 'in Formalist terminology, [Johnson] applies a specific device

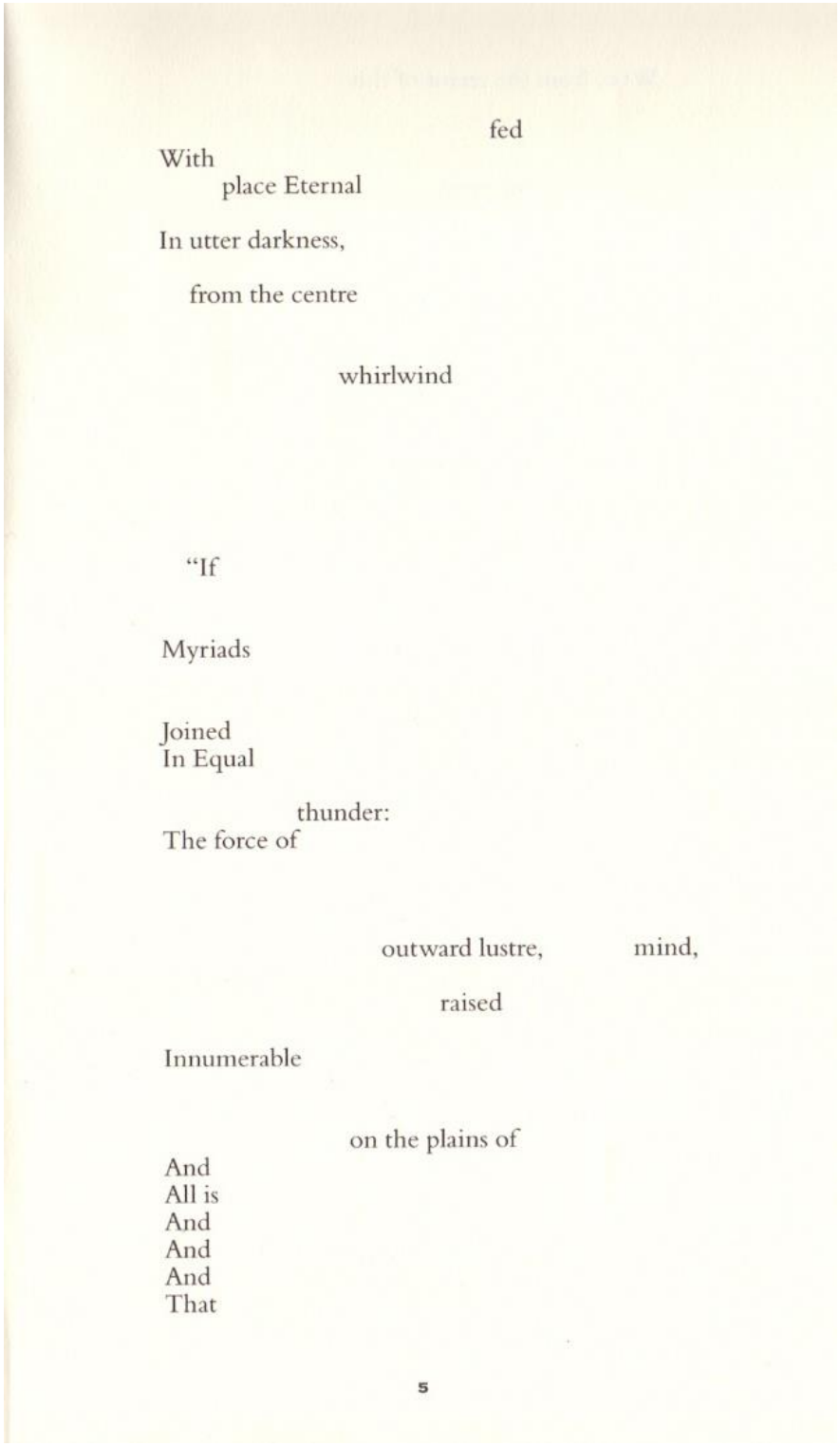
[229] de Man, 141.
[230] HTVN, 11.
[231] *Radi os* is widely described as a 'rewriting by excision,' though this phrase is rarely referenced. It is a rephrasing of an alternative title of *Radi os* – 'Poem excised Paradise Lost' – introduced by Johnson himself. See: Peter O'Leary, a letter to Ron Silliman, *Silliman's blog*, 29 March 2003, accessed 08 September 2014, http://ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/2003_03_23_archive.html.

of "finding and extracting."'[232] Although Johnson is not interested in treating the pages of his source text in the way Phillips does, typography still plays a significant role in his project. All the phrases that Johnson chooses to preserve remain on each page exactly where they were originally printed in *Paradise Lost*, forming a network of clusters of texts and blank spaces, a map to navigate this peculiar type of intertextuality [Figure 21]. While 'remapping the space of dis-covered page,' as Dworkin puts it, 'the treated texts rechart the contours of its layout with clusters of text.'[233]

Johnson applies the same erasure technique to all but one of his pages. Inserted as an epigraph to *Radi os* are the opening sixteen lines of Book One of Milton's epic, also repeated and erased, but erased with a difference, or, perhaps more accurately, with a *différance*.[234] The same source text that is subsequently repurposed to compose the opening section of *Radi os* is used in the epigraph, but where the first page of Johnson's poem is composed solely of text and blanks left by the erased script, the epigraph includes a transcript of the entire passage lifted from Milton. However, all the text that is later erased by Johnson is here greyed out, with only the words that Johnson retains in his poem printed in black font [Figure 22]. Milton's original text as printed in the epigraph remains on the page but fades into the background, still visible, still legible, but only just; marking, I argue, Milton's inescapable presence within Johnson's subsequent pages and the inherently iterative nature of erasure as a

[232] Steve McCafferey, 'Corrosive Poetics: The Relief Composition of Ronal Johnson's *Radi os*', *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 11.2 (2002), 124.
[233] Dworkin, *Reading*, 128.
[234] *Différance* is a term coined by Derrida meaning both 'to defer' and 'to differ.' Derrida's *différance* points to a number of features that govern the process of production of meaning. Derrida understands words as always deferred, i.e. as signs of which meaning is never completely apparent, unless defined in relation to other words, from which they differ. This is a dynamic that is explicitly evoked in *A Humument*, and in erasure writing more broadly, where writing emerges as a result of a deferral in the relationship between the source and erased text, but is only possible if difference between the two is apparent. Characteristically, Derrida talks about the notion of *différance* in terms of what he describes as 'spacing': '*Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other. This spacing is the simultaneously active and passive (the 'a' of *différance* indicates this indecision as concerns activity and passivity, that which cannot be governed by or distributed between the terms of this opposition) production of the intervals without which the "full" terms would not signify, would not function' [Derrida, *Positions*, 21]. It is out of the work of spacing that differences are produced, where differences are held both within space and within time. When read in relation to Derrida's notion, erasure can be seen as a mediation on the Derridean work of spacing, its literal rendering, where not just the words themselves but the spaces between them assume generative, productive qualities. It is within the space of the gaps on the page that the meaning is produced. The spatio-temporal structure of spacing as defined by Derrida is echoed most explicitly in Phillips's broader project, where the work of spacing is an ongoing process, with the gaps transforming not only in the physical space of a page but also in time, changing with each subsequent edition.

writing technique. An act of erasure, Johnson seems to suggest, is always an act repetition, always inevitably a manifestation of iterative thinking.



fed
With
place Eternal
In utter darkness,
from the centre
whirlwind

"If

Myriads

Joined
In Equal
thunder:
The force of

outward lustre, mind,
raised
Innumerable

on the plains of
And
All is
And
And
And
That

5

FIGURE 21: RONALD JOHNSON, *RADI OS*, P. 5

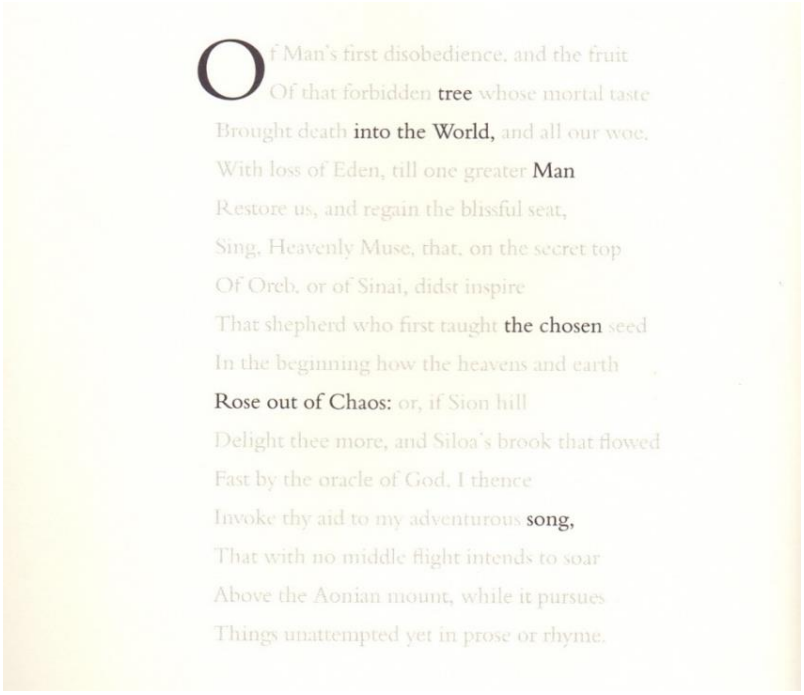

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

FIGURE 22: RONALD JOHNSON, *RADI OS*, EPIGRAPH

Johnson's approach reverberates clearly with Luca Foss's remarks on his *Variation I* of Handel's *Concerto Grosso*, which Johnson references in his 'Note' to *Radi os*: 'groups of instruments play the Larghetto but keep submerging into inaudibility [...]. Handel's notes are always present but often inaudible. The inaudible moments leave holes in Handel's music (I composed the holes).'[235] Subsuming echoes of Foss's influence on his own creative practice, Johnson engages in a similar method, only substituting acoustic inaudibility for scriptural illegibility, in a textual reiteration of Handel-Foss dynamics, foregrounding the absent-presence of Milton on a page. As McCaffery puts it,

> by way of retinal tracking and excavation of the latent other poem *Radi os* 'quotes' the inaudible Milton, the Milton that is not Milton's thereby bringing to textual apposition Rimboud's famous ontological claim that 'I is an other' linguistically reformulated as 'Text holds also an Other.'[236]

McCaffery's approach is evocative of the Third Mind thinking, pointing to a complex structure of textual production. Here, Milton composed *Paradise Lost*, Johnson, 'composed the holes,'[237] and the Third Mind of this collaboration shaped *Radi os*. The *Radi os* Milton might not be Milton's, as McCafferey points out, but it is still,

[235] Ronald Johnson, 'A Note and a Dedication', in *Radi os* (Chicago: Flood Editions, 2005), non pag.
[236] McCafferey, 'Corrosive', 126.
[237] Johnson, 'A Note'.

inevitably, Milton, altered, a 'reduced, alembicated form of *Paradise Lost,*'[238] a hybrid that is Johnson's Milton, but Milton nevertheless. This, however, is not a feature of erasure as a creative method in general, as I will argue later in this chapter, but a characteristic quality of Johnson's approach to erasure and his source text. Milton's presence, like Handel's in Foss, remains prominent in Johnson's work. Hence, as Eric Sellinger points out,

> *Radi os* is anything but eccentric. [...] [Johnson's] poem places him squarely at the crossroads of two major Milton-reading traditions: the British romantic misprisons of Wordsworth and Blake, and the American romantic response in Poe and Emerson.[239]

Sellinger's statement points to Johnson's declaration included in the opening note to the text in which the author describes *Radi os* as 'the book Blake gave me [Johnson].'[240] This approach places *Radi os* in a line of works continuing in the tradition of the source text, rather than transgressing and deconstructing it.

However, such thinking about the nature of Johnson's engagement with his source is problematic where the form of *Radi os* is concerned. Overtly experimental in their approach to the verse form, the pages of *Radi os* seem more evocative of the representative works of twentieth-century avant-gardes than those of the Romantics. As a strategy of both reading and writing, the paragramatic take on textuality inherent in erasure writing challenges the normative referentiality of language in a characteristically avant-garde fashion. By approaching a page of a source text as a platform for creative practice Phillips and Johnson, to various degrees, erase or overwrite the original, obscuring the text, rendering most of it illegible, and at the same time pouring new meaning into the reframed, remaining fragments. They engineer novel linguistic relationships built out of the pre-inscribed syntactic structures. As such, a text created by means of erasure is, in a characteristically postmodern sense, always already written. With their treatments of Milton and Mallock, Johnson and Phillips respectively engage in a process of simultaneously rewriting and 'misreading',[241] to adopt Ihab Hassan's term, and as such their erasures can be considered representative of radical subversive experimentation characteristic of postmodern poetics of the time. Hassan defines 'misreading' as one of the formative attributes of postmodernism, as opposed to the prevailing modernist hermeneutic preoccupation with interpretation. Similarly, Brian McHale identifies erasure as an

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[238] McCafferey,'Corrosive', 125.
[239] Eric Selinger, '"I Composed the Holes": Reading Rona Johnson's "Radi os"', *Contemporary Literature*, 33.1 (1992), 47-8.
[240] Johnson, 'A Note'.
[241] Ihab Hassan, 'The Culture of Postmodernism', *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 2. 3 (1985), 119-32.

inherently postmodern practice, as an expression of the broader ontological instability of postmodern poetry, exemplifying postmodern poetry's tendency towards what he refers to as 'spaciness [...] an attenuation of the verbal text and its progressive infiltration by ever greater volumes of white space.'[242] Through their 'corrosive poetics,'[243] to adopt McCafferey's term, Johnson and Phillips also echo Cage's and Mac Low's diastic reading through procedural writing. As such, they fall into the broader frame of postmodern experimental revisionism dominating their contemporary literary scene. With their resistance to grand narratives as well as fixity and constraints of the canon their writing represents, as one of Phillips's meta-erasures reads, 'a generation in love with chancy art.'[244]

Seemingly postmodern in its take on textuality, writing by erasure also reverberates clearly with the modernist aesthetics of fragmentation, of automatic collage writing, of poetry that could be described, after Perloff, as continuing 'in the Pound tradition.'[245] This is writing that is quotational, to return Greaney's term, always implicated in or committed to referencing the unambiguously defined source. Erasure as practised by Phillips and Johnson destroys and reaffirms the source text at the same time. For Phillips and Johnson writing by erasure is not just writing through but a dialogic process of reading-(re)writing in a dynamic interplay of a text and its intertext. The erased text conceptualised as such serves as an immediate acknowledgement of the source, a peculiar conceptual footnote to it, and as such proves reminiscent of Eliot's meticulously hyperbolic footnoting in *The Wasteland* and Pound's poetic approach, both heavily reliant on citation strategies. To cite Travis Macdonald, commenting on Pound's method:

> Ezra Pound might have travelled freely across the borders of appropriation, borrowing heavily from Homer and a host of others. Yet, even Pound's imperative ('make it new') was more a matter of historical incorporation and homage than a truly revisionist gesture.[246]

The same thinking about the nature of engagement with a source reverberates in Macdonald's understanding of Pound's citationality and Sellinger's description of *Radi os*, both pointing to acts of iteration as a means of writing on rather than writing though or against an appropriated text.

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[242] Brian McHale, 'Poetry under Erasure', in *Theory into Poetry: New Approaches to the Lyric,* ed. Eva Müller-Zettelmann and Margarete Rubik (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), 278.
[243] McCafferey, 'Corrosive', 125.
[244] HTVN, 29.
[245] Marjorie Perloff, 'The Sound of Poetry', *PMLA* 123 (2008), 753.
[246] Travis Macdonald, 'A Brief History of Erasure Poetics', *Jacket* 38 (2009), accessed 03 March 2012, http://jacketmagazine.com/38/macdonald-erasure.shtml.

The difficulty of reading erasures by Johnson and Phillips as either unambiguously modernist or postmodern practice resides in a differentiation between distinct approaches to citation as a creative tool. The former is based on the meticulous, conservative structure of reference as a means of following in a tradition of the source text, the latter a more open and subversive writing through, citing in a manner of Gertrude Stein rather than Ezra Pound (as Stein wrote: 'I could never bring myself to use [...] quotation marks, they are unnecessary, they are ugly, they spoil the fine line of writing and printing'). [247] What transpires from this collage of contradictory critical voices is a sense that erasures according to Phillips and Johnson seem to reside rather uncomfortably in their cultural moment. The very scant body of available criticism addressing both texts fails to find an adequate aesthetic framework for this creative approach as it emerged in the 1970s. And although Phillips seems an easier case here, almost immediately and exclusively approached as, first and foremost, a visual artist, Johnson's practice proves more problematic. His work is on the one hand experimental, subversive and intertextual enough to be considered postmodern (though anthologists of postmodern American poetry are reluctant to include *Radi os*), transgressive on the formal level to the extent that makes Johnson's writing akin to that of Olson's and Mac Low's, but at the same time too canonical, too conservative, too much about Milton and continuing in the Miltonic tradition, to be recognised as such, too modernist in its approach to fragmentation and appropriation of the canon to fit the avant-garde climate of the 1970s. I would like to suggest that this disjunction can be addressed by looking at the current proliferation and rise in prominence of erasure writing as a creative technique. Importantly, Ruefle's contemporary erasure by Tippexing, and erasures generated by the Wave Books online engine, openly follow the avant-garde practices described above and already explored over 40 years ago by Johnson and Phillips. 'This situation has [...] already been announced,' to borrow from Derrida, 'why is it today in the process of making itself known *as such* and *after the fact*?'[248]

More than just an echo of those two texts discussed above, I argue, Wave Books's engagement with erasure writing represents an interest in a currently proliferating approach that I will refer to here, after Fitterman and Place, as creativity by erasure.[249] Alongside a selection of other contemporary, radical takes on iterative

[247] Gertrude Stein, *Writings Volume 2: 1932-1946* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 317.
[248] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 9. Hereafter OG.
[249] Vanessa Place and Robert Fitterman, *Notes on Conceptualism* (New York, Ugly Ducking Presse, 2010).

writing, which will be discussed later in this thesis, erasure is increasingly being adapted as an expression of a tendency for repetition, appropriation, and the aesthetics of copying in contemporary writing, as discussed in Chapter 1. The emergence and proliferation of erasure writing in the last decade is a manifestation of postproduction sensibilities. 'The form speaks directly to the moment in which we live,' as Sean Bishop declares,

> every day, we are overwhelmed with information, and we have to excerpt that information to make a story. Complete and unchallenged narratives are almost never given to us anymore, or rather, we're [...] less and less inclined to accept them.[250]

The avant-garde experiment that Johnson and Phillips instigated in the 1970s, alongside literary developments such as concrete poetry, found poetry, and literary appropriation in general, seem to have found a more appropriate cultural moment, to become re-appropriated as widely recognised creative practices that offer tools of cultural critique particularly relevant today. As Goldsmith suggests, commenting on what he sees as the contemporary rediscovery of concretism:

> it's taken the web to make us see how prescient concrete poetics was in predicting its own lively reception half a century later. [...] what has been missing from concrete poetry was an appropriate environment in which it could flourish. For many years, concrete poetry has been in limbo: it's been a displaced genre in search of a new medium. And now it's found one.[251]

The twenty-first-century interest in erasure reverberates clearly with the same cultural dynamics. Thus, today, the nature of erasure specifically, and appropriation more broadly, requires a reconceptualisation of these practices to include the proclivity of the current cultural moment, and my reading of twenty-first-century creativity by erasure resides in the approach as an underlying framework. In Derridean terms, writing by erasure now acts as 'not only the system of notation [...] but the essence and the content of these activities themselves,'[252] a manifestation of the essence of digital technology driven by the contemporary frame of the overarching 'copy-paste' models of textual production and information dissemination.

Commenting on a contemporary collection of erasure poems, Janet Holmes's *The MS of MY Kin* (2009), Ron Silliman recently raised questions of value and innovation embedded in writing by erasure as it proliferates at present, asking whether contemporary iterations of the technique carry forward 'in the same

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[250] Sean Bishop, an Interview by Wendy Xu, *iO Poetry*, 1.2 (2011), accessed 16 January 2012, http://iopoetry.org/archives/684.
[251] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'From (Command) Line to (Iconic) Constellation', *UbuWeb Papers*, accessed 10 November 2014, http://www.ubu.com/papers/goldsmith_command.html.
[252] OG, 9.

innovative spirit as the works that initiated them, or perhaps represent something [...] different.' [253] Questions of reverence for and exigency of – as Silliman rather dismissively puts it – 'an "erased" edition of every major work of English language'[254] aside, I would like to suggest that the latter is in fact the case, that erasure today emerges as a form characteristic of the Iterative turn and so should be seen as inherently contemporary. As Dworkin argues,

> even identical modes of illegibility[255] produce a wide variety of unique local effects. [...] The formal elements of a text signify in specific, politically and historically inflected ways. [...] Form must always necessarily signify but any particular signification is historically contingent and never inherently meaningful a priori.[256]

It is the foundations of the current cultural moment, residing in the transition of discursive practices from the printing press to digital textuality that, as I have already argued in Chapter 1, can be seen to affect the development of contemporary subjectivity also beyond the immediate confines of the digital environment. Erasure at the Iterative turn proliferates as a response to a particular technological thinking, to the essence of technology in its contemporary articulation. 'In the last half-century,' Macdonald contends, 'under the mounting informational influences [...] the use of appropriation as a poetic tool has moved from the outskirts of abject plagiarism to a semi-accepted practice.'[257] The challenges of thinking about erasure as it emerged in the 1970s, the discrepancy between paradigms of modernism and postmodernism manifested in Johnson's and Phillips's work, now blend into a complex, hybrid aesthetics of what Perloff describes as twenty-first-century modernism,[258] 'the new poetics,' comfortably appropriating both postmodern subversion and modernist formalism, both converging in a postproduction, iterative aesthetics of today. It is the contemporary manifestations of erasure that are of particular interest to my argument here; texts triggered by a shifting attitude towards creativity at the Iterative turn, as discussed in the following sections of this chapter. I approach erasure as an expression of a clearly defined cultural moment to offer a framework for thinking about emergent paradigms of authorship.

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[253] Ron Silliman, blog post, 19 March 2009, accessed 2 July 2012, http://ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/2009/03/janet-holmes-couple-of-books-that-have.html.
[254] Silliman, blog, 19 March 2009.
[255] Dworkin talks about 'illegibility' with reference to a wide range of experimental textual practices, erasure among them.
[256] Dworkin, *Reading*, xix-xx.
[257] Macdonald, 'A Brief History'.
[258] Marjorie Perloff, *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

2.2. ERASURE AT THE ITERATIVE TURN

Janet Holmes's 2009 poetry collection, *The MS of MY Kin* could be quoted as a representative example of contemporary erasure writing. The volume is an appropriation by erasure of Emily Dickinson's 1861 and 1862 poems. As Holmes explains, the dating of the source is significant. Dickinson's poems used in *The MS* go back to the first years of the United States Civil War, and were selected to provide a springboard for a creative response to another war – America's invasion of Iraq. This approach is a manifestation of writing that, in a typically Derridean fashion, borrows from a heritage to deconstruct a heritage. Repeated and altered by means of erasure, Dickinson's meditation on creativity, the inner flame that motivates the writing process in her 'The Lamp Burns Sure Within', for example, transforms into Holmes's statement on oil politics and contemporary struggles for access to Middle Eastern resources, often identified as the key cause of the Iraq War. The two poems read:

The Lamp burns sure – within –
Tho' Serfs – supply the Oil –
It matters not the busy Wick –
At her phosphoric toil!

It matters

The Slave – forgets – to fill –
The lamp – burns golden – on
Unconscious that the oil is our –
As that the Slave – is gone.

that the oil
is gone

Holmes's Iraq war references are subtle, but echo clearly throughout the collection. The historical and conceptual framework is also acknowledged in the author's 'Notes', identifying people and events referenced in the poems, ranging from the very general ('soldiers, terrorists, occupiers, insurgents, and combatants on both sides') to incredibly specific (Holmes names President George W. Bush, pilots of aircrafts on 9/11, Osama Bin Laden, and Donald Rumsfeld, among others).[259]

But it is not just the subject matter that is carefully contextualised in *The MS of MY Kin*. Holmes positions her work in line with the tradition of writing by erasure and eagerly references Phillips and Johnson as her sources of inspiration, proclaiming a particular affinity with the latter. There is a sense of a negotiation of idiosyncrasies

[259] Janet Holmes, 'Notes', in *The MS of M Y Kin* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2009), 169.

of history and poetry that converge in the experimental form of an erased poem. As Holmes explains:

> Erasure had seemed almost a parlor game to me in the past; it seemed too easy to have meaning. [...] But what I discovered was a deep sense of collaboration in the process. I had to negotiate Dickinson's language, history, and [...] spiritual life, and found it immensely well suited to our own situation in what now seem to be the early years of a long, horrifying war. [...] The voice is neither Dickinson's nor my own: it is a third thing I use to unloose my anger.[260]

Holmes, like Phillips before her, references the nature of the Third Mind of Collaboration that creativity by erasure brings to the fore. This thinking about writing as a form of repetition that is collaborative, that gives rise to a third subjectivity and relies on the possibility of iteration and alteration of the source text at the same time, explicitly resonates in Holme's understanding of erasure writing. Writing by means of erasure, for Holmes, is an inherently iterative practice. It is driven by a commitment to repetition and involves, first, a retyping of the complete poems by Dickinson to then white out fragments of the text: 'they [the words] are there,' Holmes explains, 'but they don't show up when printed.'[261] In a manner evocative of Johnson's appropriation of Milton, Holmes's is a repetition of the complete source text that assumes not only a hybrid subjectivity, but a hybrid form as well, with erasure structured as an act of textual removal and a graft at the same time, of a trace and a supplement.

Such an absent-presence of words on a page also manifests itself in Yedda Morrison's *Darkness* (2012), an erasure of the first chapter of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). The design of Morrison's volume creates an illusion of a script read with an eraser, with slightly uneven smudges marking strokes of the erasing reader-writer's hand preserved on all pages [Figure 23]. This approach is evocative of Rauschenberg's gesture. His de Kooning drawing bears noticeable traces of both ink and crayon; marks of the act of erasure itself. Neither Morrison nor Rauschenberg produce a complete blank. Instead, their blank spaces are a constant reminder that, as Dworkin puts it, 'there are no real absences, only replacements, one layer upon another.'[262] Here, blank spaces replace language or an image in the process of

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[260] Janet Holmes, 'Journal, Day Two', 16 January 2007, *Harriett: the poetry blog*, accessed 30 June 2012, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/01/journal-day-two-27/.
[261] Janet Holmes, 'The MS of M Y Kin', *Shearsman Books*, accessed 27 June 2012, http://www.shearsman.com/ws-shop/category/794-authors/product/4119-janet-holmes-the-ms-of-m-y-kin.
[262] Craig Dworkin, *No Medium* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013), 42. Such thinking about the impossibility of a blank space also echoes with John Cage's understanding of the existence of silence. Cage writes: 'There is no/ such thing as silence. Something is al-/ways happening that makes a sound' [John Cage, 'Communication', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 51]. Cage's influence

meaning making. Morrison's take on *Heart of Darkness* is a manifestation of this approach. In her project, the author focuses on leaving behind only words and phrases which reference the natural world. This 'linguistic excision of all things human [...] a biocentric reworking of the original text,'[263] as Morrison describes it, brings to the fore questions of how source texts reassert themselves in the process of erasure writing, in the 'luminous space,'[264] as *Darkness* reads, on the erased page. Erasure here emerges as a source of a new origin, in the process of iteration repeating something that has already been said and that which has not, as yet, been articulated at the same time, engaging in the past and the future of writing simultaneously.

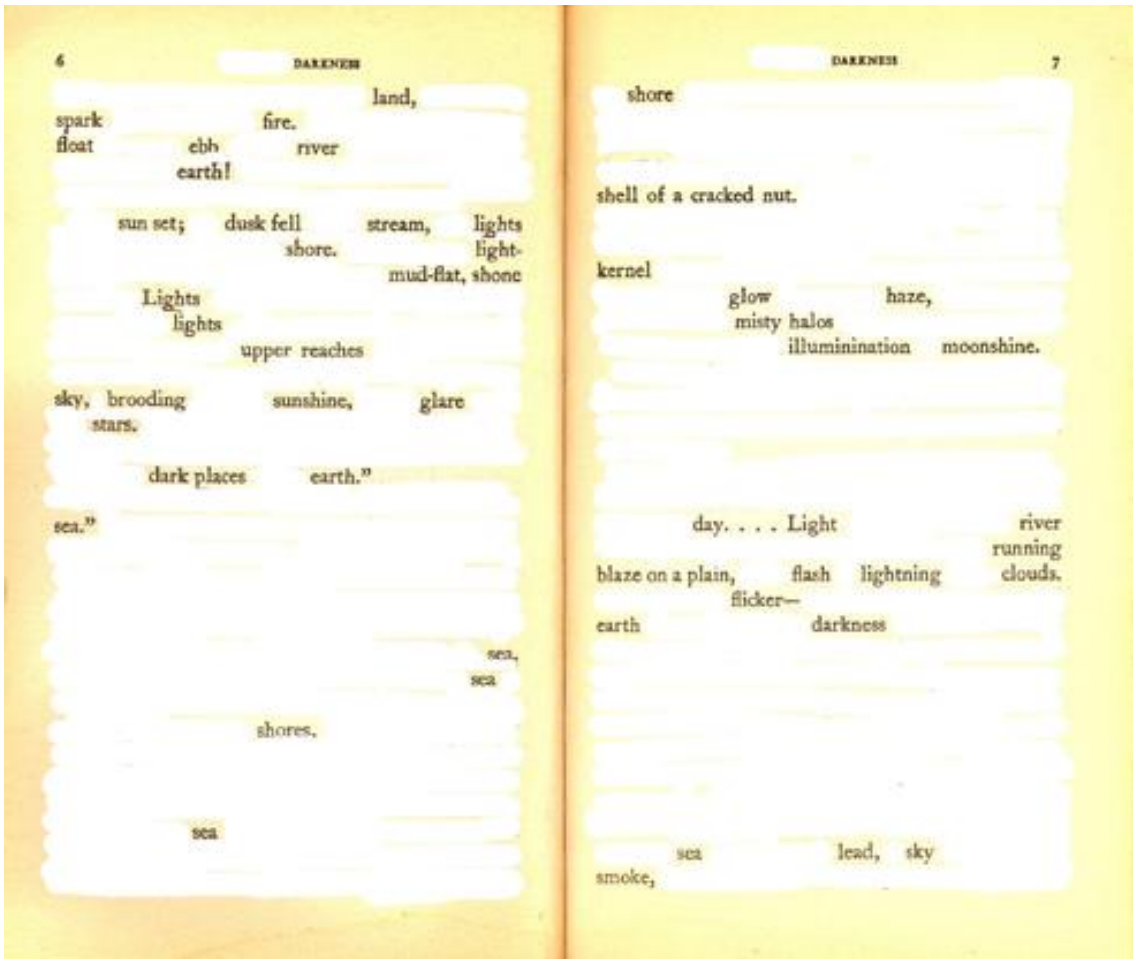


FIGURE 23: YEDDA MORRISON, *DARKNESS*

Reading *Darkness* results in a realisation that, as Dworkin puts it, 'what counts as "the natural world" is far from self-evident, and Morrison's erasures open

is, I suggest, of significant importance to understanding contemporary iterative attitudes to creativity and will be discussed in more detail in relation to code poetics in Chapter 4.

[263] Yedda Morrison, 'August 5-26. DARKNESS (chapter 1)', *Not Content*, accessed 24 April 2012, http://www.notcontent.lesfigues.com/2010/06/yedda-morrison/.

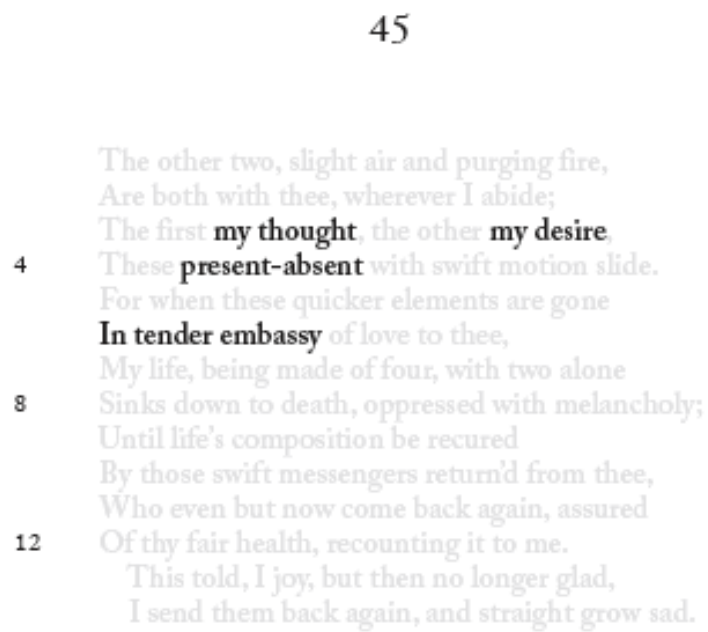
[264] Yedda Morrison, *Darkness* (Los Angeles: Make Now, 2012), 3.

to a range of philosophical and ethical questions.'[265] I am less interested in the ecocritical undertones of Morrison's work than in her engagement with a broad range of questions on the nature of composition and the way language is (re)produced and circulated. These issues are reflected in the author's collaboration on the Not Content project. Set up as a gallery residency in Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 2010, Not Content brought together a number of installations curated by Les Figues Press to explore 'the ways in which language functions within public and private spheres and within the tenuous space between these real and imagined realms' and to interrogate 'what is unsaid beneath the saying and said within a silence?' [266] Alongside Morrison, participating writers included Craig Dworkin, Johanna Drucker, and Vanessa Place, among others. Morrison's residency focused on turning the process of erasing Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* into an act of public collaborative authorship. Morrison's installation comprised a text of *Heart of Darkness* painted on the gallery walls, inviting the visitors to erase words and phrases they saw as relating to imperialism and the natural world, in line with the conceptual framework employed in *Darkness*. By foregrounding creativity by collaborative means, Morrison's project turns into a poignant meditation on questions of the third mind, even more apparent here than in the individual erasure poetry volumes. A certain sense of an impossibility of attribution emerges from this collaborative erasure that subsumes a multiplicity of voices, all contained in one erased text. This is a subjectivity transformed, expressed in a hybrid process that involves reading and writing in equal terms, and, through a juxtaposition of both, raising questions about the stability of textual origins, and, hence, of originality. Here, to borrow from Spivak, 'each act of reading the "text" is a preface to the next.'[267]

A similar, marked self-reflexivity also features prominently in Jen Bervin's volume *Nets* (2004), a collection of erased Shakespearian sonnets. As one of the *Nets* poems reads, the collection remains 'anchored'[268] in the source text, which remains 'present-absent,'[269] in a marked way 'vanishing or vanished'[270] at all times. Bervin's words emerge from 'the deep vermilion figures of [...] [a] shadow'[271] of Shakespeare's text, literally surrounded by nets of the source text, the faded, greyed-out language out of which Bervin's selection of words emerges in black print, employing the method

[265] Craig Dworkin, appraisal for *Darkness*, Yedda Morrison, *Darkness* (Los Angeles: Make Now, 2012), back cover.
[266] 'About', *Not Content*, accessed 12 April 2012, http://www.notcontent.lesfigues.com/category/about/.
[267] TPOG, xii.
[268] Jen Bervin, *Nets* (New York: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2010), 137.
[269] Ibid, 45.
[270] Ibid, 63.
[271] Ibid 98.

Johnson used in his epigraph to *Radi os* [Figure 24]. 'I stripped Shakespeare's sonnets bare to the "nets,"' Bervin writes, 'to make the space of the poems open, porous, possible – a divergent elsewhere.'[272] The interplay of the fading text of the original and the black font of Bervin's poems invites a collaboration between the two, engaging in a dialogic exchange between Bervin and Shakespeare, in a perpetual erasure to come, erasing Shakespeare who, at the same time, to borrow from Harold Bloom, 'will not allow you to bury him, or escape him, or replace him.'[273]


45

The other two, slight air and purging fire,
Are both with thee, wherever I abide;
The first my thought, the other my desire,
These present-absent with swift motion slide.
For when these quicker elements are gone
In tender embassy of love to thee,
My life, being made of four, with two alone
Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy;
Until life's composition be recured
By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
Who even but now come back again, assured
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me.
This told, I joy, but then no longer glad,
I send them back again, and straight grow sad.

FIGURE 24: JEN BERVIN, *NETS*, PAGE 45

Though overtly acknowledging her inescapable influence – an approach particularly relevant where a text of such pervasive cultural prominence is concerned – Bervin, like Morrison and Holmes, moves away from a reading-writing by erasure as exemplified by Johnson in *Radi os*. This is where, I would like to suggest, a marked difference can be discerned between the practice of erasure adapted by contemporary authors and that of Johnson and Phillips. Rather than focusing on re-reading the source, providing a confined commentary on and an elaborate footnote to the original text, contemporary erasure writers engage with the pre-inscribed frame of familiar,

[272] Jen Bervin, 'Working Note', in *Nets*, 151.
[273] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), xviii.

canonical discourse to reappropriate the sources and create new, stand-alone works rather than intertexts heavily dependent on and closely interlaced with the original. Johnson uses Milton to create a work that could be described as Johnson's Milton, in which Milton still remains at the core of the erasure. In contrast, Bervin, Morrison, and Holmes engage with Shakespeare, Conrad, and Dickinson respectively to create contemporary poetry volumes by Bervin, Morrison, and Holmes. These new, original works treat a source as a creative springboard that presupposes an intrinsic level of engagement with the old but at the same time instigates a propensity for innovation and experimentation. 'After form,'[274] both constructing and at the same time de-constructing the fixity and stability of the canonical core, these twenty-first-century erasures entice an engagement with both broad significant contemporary questions as well as the dynamic of the Iterative turn. Unlike Johnson's negative poetics of loss, as described by McCafferey, Holmes, Morrison, and Bervin engage in a poetic play of *différance*. Instead of perpetuating the set of values advocated in the sources, as Johnson does, these contemporary writers simultaneously preserve and deconstruct it, to find those moments in the re-appropriated discourse that enable them to transgress the system of values exemplified by it, to transpose and translate them into the value of their own and their own time. The writing generated as a result opens the fixity of the source to the possibilities of new meaning. The contemporary context of postproduction culture affords a certain level of permissiveness for experimentation and appropriation beyond its familiar limits. As such, Bervin's poetry, just like Morrison's and Holmes's, enables, as Philip Metres observed, a re-reading of the dynamic governing the relationship between tradition and modernism. In other words,

> rather than simply engaging in a poetic deconstruction of Shakespeare [...] Bervin's text seems to perform an elegiac rendering of the 'post-literary' moment itself. In an age in which literature itself seems to be part of residual culture [...] and 'Shakespeare' functions as tattered banner under which cultural conservatives like Harold Bloom battle the evils of political correctness and postmodernism in the academy [...] Bervin's text breaks the urns of the sonnets into their fragmented parts, thus rendering the ghostly whole wholly ghostly.[275]

2.3. WRITING *SOUS RATURE*

By acknowledging and at the same time repudiating the traditional text, Rueffle, Morrison, Holmes, and Bervin all produce difference out of sameness,

[274] Bervin, *Nets*, 13.
[275] Philip Metres, review of *Nets* by Jen Bervin, *Jacket* 25 (2004), accessed 12 July 2012, http://jacketmagazine.com/25/metr-berv.html.

presence and absence at the same time, both in a physical-typographical terms and through their approach to questions of authorship and the proprietary nature of a text. Theirs is a strikingly self-reflexive page,[276] an experiment with form and an exploration of its expressive possibilities. Their writing can be said to operate *sous rature*, under erasure, as Spivak translates Derrida's term in her preface to *Of Grammatology* (1976). Fittingly, Gregory Ulmer sees grammatology – 'a science of the effacement of the trace'[277] – as a 'theory of writing as citation.'[278] For Ulmer citation 'does not reproduce the real, but constructs an object (its lexical field includes the terms "assemble, build, join, unite, add, combine, link, construct, organise") [...] in order to intervene in the world, not to reflect but to change reality.'[279] Understood as such, writing *sous rature* turns into a framework particularly fitting a discussion of erasure writing today; it emerges as a vehicle of change that unsettles and destabilises the familiar paradigms, effacing a trace, propagating writing that is iterative rather than creative.

Writing *sous rature* is a method employed by Derrida, understood as a process of writing a word, crossing it out, and leaving both printed on a page[280] to suggest that something proves both 'inaccurate yet necessary to say.'[281] In this approach the authority of the text is put into question and attention is brought to its provisional nature. Thinking about writing *sous rature* gives prominence to the conceptualisation of the (unoriginal) origin as a trace, that which is not there, a presence and an absence at the same time, always arrived at in a process of a creation of a context for simultaneous production and erasure of discourse. As Derrida puts it,

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[276] I borrow the phrase from Louis Lüthi's *On the Self-Reflexive Page* (2010). The volume is a history of self-reflexive pages of sorts, documented in an iterative act, and published as a volume of reprinted pages from a number of works that foreground experimentation with the possibilities of a printed page. Lüthi's sources are as varied as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), Mark Danielewski's *The House of Leaves* (2000) and William H. Gass's The *Tunnel* (1995).

[277] TPOG, xlviii.

[278] Gregory Ulmer, 'The Object of Post-Criticism', in *The Anti-Aesthetics: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: The New Press, 2002), 100.

[279] Ibid, 97.

[280] Derrida's understanding of *sous rature* as a sign that has been crossed out is based on Heidegger's 'Being' that has been crossed out on the page. But, as Spivak explains, there is a difference between Heidegger's and Derrida's method of putting words under erasure: '"Being" is the master-word that Heidegger crosses out. Derrida does not reject this. But his word is "trace" [...] a word that cannot be a master-word, that presents itself as the mark of an anterior presence, origin, master [...] Heidegger's ~~Being~~ might point at an inarticulable presence. Derrida's ~~trace~~ is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience' [TPOG, xv, xvii]. It is Derrida's questioning of origins that I am particularly interested in here as a framework for thinking about erasure writing. For Derrida origin, and, hence, originality (if originality is to be understood as a manifestation of textual origins, as discussed in Chapter 1) emerge as a trace, where origins are always put into question, erased, perhaps, and where the authority of texts is recognised as provisional.

[281] TPOG, xiii-xiv.

> this interweaving results in each 'element' [...] being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the text produced only in a transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.[282]

Just like Derrida's sign *sous rature*, the contemporary approach to writing by erasure remains guided by the constant preservation and at the same time effacement of the sign, reversing, displacing and dismantling it, in order to 'reconstruct what is always already inscribed,'[283] writing by erasure as writing as tracing. Here, reading the blank[284] is as important, if not more so, than reading the text itself. The space on the page signifies as a trace of the source text, of that which is not there, and as a signifying structure in its own right. As Derrida suggests, 'spacing is not a simple negativity of a lacuna but rather the emergence of the mark.'[285] Or, as Dworkin puts it, 'rather than decrease the signifying ability of the text by making portions of the print illegible, [...] erasures merely replace one set of signs with another equally significant set.'[286]

If, as Derrida explains, writing is always a structure of signs under erasure, 'a gesture effacing the presence of a thing and yet keeping it legible [...] always already inhabited by the trace of another sign which never appears as such,'[287] then the examples of writing by erasure discussed in this chapter become an essence of what writing in general in fact represents. Turning into an exaggerated form of a Barthesian tissue of quotations, writing by erasure enables writers to openly acknowledge the layers of influence embedded in any act of writing, refuting the Romantic notions of genius. When read in line with Derrida's concept, the designation of the original texts turns into a nucleus of a plethora of possible new meanings, replacing the provisional closure embedded in the familiar notions of a literary work, fixed in the materiality of print and the inherent limitations of a bound, complete volume. A commitment to questioning the origins of texts – and hence their originality – allows for a shift in the

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[282] Derrida, *Positions*, 26.
[283] TPOG, lxxvii
[284] Edmund Jabès's dictum – 'read the blanks' – reverberates explicitly in such thinking about erasure writing. As Jabès wrote: 'A sound – uttered by whom? – and then nothing./ A word – written by whom – and then a blank. / Listen to the nothing. Read the blank' [Edmund Jabès, reprinted in *The Book of Margins*, trans. Rosemary Waldrop (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), xi]. Here the eraser is more important than the pencil, the sound created in an interlude more significant than the music, an attitude evocative of Cage's broader project and his experience of working with Schoenberg: 'One day when I was studying with Schoenberg, he pointed out the eraser on his pencil and said, 'this end is more important than the other" [John Cage, 'Indeterminancy', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 270].
[285] SEC, 10.
[286] Dworkin, *Reading*, 143.
[287] TPOG, xli, xxxix.

approach to the relationship between the source text and its iteration. When understood as an expression of Derrida's *sous rature*, 'the relationship between the reinscribed text and the so-called original text is not that of patency and latency, but rather the relationship between the two palimpsests.'[288] Or, as Derrida puts it, 'reading [and writing] resembles those X-ray pictures which discover, under the epidermis of the last painting, another hidden picture: of the same painter or another painter, no matter.'[289] Moving away from the finite nature of writing, authorship, and originality in copyright terms, in writing erasure, as in composition *sous rature*, 'all conclusions,' Spivak writes, 'are genuinely provisional and therefore inconclusive, [...] all origins are similarly unoriginal.'[290] As such erasure as a creative technique can be seen as an extension of the statement, a manifestation of Goldsmith's uncreative writing as an expression of the open, provisional and infinite nature of language-play that Derrida advocates. This is a language that, in a form of an erasure of now canonised text, 'bears with itself the necessity of its own critique,' as Derrida contends, 'a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself.'[291] The same sense of unoriginality that does not imply a lack of originality in aesthetic terms but only a removal from an origin of a work or a text – from its author – reverberates here and in my discussion of iteration in Chapter 1. As a project committed to a reconceptualisation of the value of writing and a means of arriving at alternative models of thinking about creativity, iteration emerges as an inherently deconstructive practice, with erasure as one manifestation of such thinking. If, as Spivak explains, 'the desire of deconstruction may itself become a desire to reappropriate the text actively through mastery, to show the text what it "does not know,"' then erasure, and iteration more broadly, can be read as an embodiment, in poetic terms, of the project of deconstruction.[292]

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[288] Ibid, lxxv.
[289] Derrida, quoted in TPOG, lxxv-vi.
[290] TPOG, xiii.
[291] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 282.
[292] Using Derrida's writing as a framework here is appropriate not just because of a useful range of terms and concepts but also because his writing is self-consciously iterative. His *Dissemination*, for example, is a collage of texts, or, as the editor's note *Dissemination* reads: 'the 'present' essay is but a tissue of 'quotations.' Some are in quotation marks. Generally faithful, those taken from *Nombres* [*Numbers*] by Phillippe Sollers are written, unless otherwise indicated, both in quotation marks and in italics' [Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Continuum, 2011), 315]. The text consists of a selection of fragments from *Numbers* and Derrida's frame text.

PART 2: DOCUMENT UNDER ERASURE

It is worth returning to Janet Holmes as a means of contextualising a characteristic way of thinking about erasure, on which I will focus in the remainder of this chapter. Holmes's interest in erasure technique in *The MS of M Y Kin* has deeply political undertones. As the author comments:

> I myself had had a very difficult and unsuccessful time trying to write about the war and was seeking a way to do it. Her [Emily Dickinson's] writing opened up a way for me, and seemed to permit a collaboration with my intentions.[293]

This choice to write under erasure was, Holmes declares, an act of desperation,[294] an attempt to deal with an inability to speak in the wake of a traumatic event. Echoes of Lyotard's take on the notion of trauma as a metaphor for the crisis of representation echo in Holmes' statement. Trauma, as understood by Lyotard, prevents closure and as a result requires alternative ways of remembering, or rather of dealing with the constant presence of the traumatic event in cultural history.[295] And although, as Aleida Assman points out, 'words cannot capture the trauma [...] it is precisely such traumas that are in need of language, although it is not the language of memory and narrative,'[296] but rather, I suggest, the fragmented language of writing *sous rature*. Erasure, I argue, is a form that can be seen as both a poignant representation of such an expressive void and a mode of writing that opens up new avenues for speaking of the traumatic experience; *sous rature* as a manifestation of language that, to paraphrase Spivak, is inadequate yet necessary.[297] Erasure, then, evokes 'the reality of a history that in its crises can only be perceived in unassimilable forms.'[298]

This inability to find language, to speak of a historical trauma of the Iraq war in Holmes's case, is an issue pervasive in erasure writing. For authors such as Travis Macdonald and M. NourbeSe Philip, whose works will be discussed in this section,

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[293] Janet Holmes, 'The Weight of What's Left [Out]: Six Contemporary Erasurists on Their Craft', interview by Andrew David King, *The Kenyon Review*, 6 November 2012, accessed 10 January 2013, http://www.kenyonreview.org/2012/11/erasure-collaborative-interview/.
[294] 'Free Verse: Erasure Poetry Festival', The Walker Art Centre, 7 April 2011, accessed 12 February 2013, http://archive-org.com/page/587027/2012-11-05/http://www.walkerart.org/channel/2011/free-verse-erasure-poetry-festival.
[295] J. F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the Jews"*, trans. Andreas Michel and Mark S. Roberts (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
[296] Aleida Assman, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilisation: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 248.
[297] TPOG, xiv.
[298] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 156.

erasure becomes a mode of 'poeticising the political.'[299] However, whereas Holmes's sources are literary – she reads-writes the Iraq war into the lines of Emily Dickinson's poetry – Macdonald and Philip resort to non-literary materials as their sources, creating poetry out of documents and court cases and, as such, 'reclaiming the political as a source for aesthetic work.'[300] Seemingly unassimilable forms here become, by means of erasure, assimilated as an aesthetic material. What follows is an attempt at devising a theory of what I see as a sub-genre of erasure writing, here described as a 'document under erasure.' What differentiates writing under erasure in general from documents under erasure is the nature of the source, the latter drawing from the repositories of the archive, history, and politics to articulate them in poetic terms. As I suggest, focusing on instances of erasure as a manifestation of iterative documentary poetics offers a means of negotiating paradigms of authorship and creativity at the Iterative turn.

2.4. TRAVIS MACDONALD, *THE O MISSION REPO*

Travis Macdonald's *The O Mission Repo* (2008) is a text I consider the key example of writing a document under erasure. The project is an iteration of the official 9/11 Report documenting, as its authors assert, 'facts and circumstances relating to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 [...] to provide the fullest possible account of the events surrounding 9/11 and to identify lessons learned.'[301] Released in 2004 by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (also known as 9/11 Commission or the Kean/Hamilton Commission) at the request of President George W. Bush and the Congress, the report is currently widely available, both for purchase and as a pdf, downloadable for free from the Commission's website. It is accepted as a definitive account of the events of 9/11. Although, rather ironically, praised for its literary qualities,[302] the report was strongly criticised. Accusations of withheld evidence have been raised against the Commission, also condemned for partiality, bias, and too narrow a scope, among other complaints. Benjamin DeMott

[299] Sikram Reddy, 'The Weight of What's Left [Out]: Six Contemporary Erasurists on Their Craft', interview by Andrew David King, *The Kenyon Review*, 6 November 2012, accessed 10 January 2013, http://www.kenyonreview.org/2012/11/erasure-collaborative-interview/.
[300] Reddy.
[301] The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, accessed 02 March 2013, http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf, xv-xvi. Hereafter CR.
[302] Richard Posner called it 'an improbable literary triumph,' while the National Book Foundation recognised it as a finalist in the non-fiction category of National Book Award 2004 [Richard A. Posner, 'The 9/11 Report: A Dissent', *The New York Times*, 29 August 2004, accessed 15 May 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/29/books/the-9-11-report-a-dissent.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm].

has gone as far as to claim that the report defrauds the American nation,[303] while David Ray Griffin, one of its most ardent critics, described the document as a lie characterised by extensive omissions and distortions.[304] Although Griffin's criticism has frequently been dismissed as representative of a long history of conspiracy theories that arise in the context of national tragedies, his declaration makes a point particularly valid as a statement on the process of the report's compilation and proves strikingly relevant in the context of erasure poetics. As I argue in this chapter, the report itself could be read as a peculiar example of writing by erasure and *The O Mission Repo* a way of addressing its omissions and distortions; a voice with a power to, as *The Repo* reads, 'redress/Its/lexicon/adjust the/lines within/between and/across.'[305]

The O Mission Repo is an appropriation of the first four sections of the 9/11 Report. The erasure comprises a 'Preface', or, as it is listed in the 'Con S' (an erasure of the report's 'Contents'), a 'Reface', erased by blacking out the original [Figure 25], and four chapters, each composed using a different erasure technique. In each case the choice of an erasure method is dictated by the content of the respective section of the report, devised, as Macdonald explains, to 'reflect and enter into conversation with the content of the chapter.'[306] In the process of reading and writing his way through the 9/11 document, Macdonald 'adapted/ from the old to the new [...] / combed,' to quote *The Repo*, 'for clues/ for story.'[307] Macdonald's initial intention was, as he explained in an interview for *Kenyon Review,* to redact the entire 9/11 Report with black bars, in the process mirroring the aesthetics of censored government documents. This approach brings to mind Jenny Holzer's *Redaction Paintings* (2006), a series of silkscreen prints replicating declassified government documents released by the National Security Archive under the Freedom of Information Act (1996). Although available to the public, these documents remain heavily redacted, censored by the government during the declassification process. Holzer's interest resides in drawing attention to means of manipulation of meaning and censorship of information that takes place during the war, asking, as Robert Storr

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[303] Benjamin DeMott, 'Whitewash as Public Service: How the 9/11 Commission Report Defrauds the Nation', *Harper's Magazine*, October 2004.
[304] David Ray Griffin, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2005).
[305] Travis Macdonald, *The O Mission Repo: a Repo of the o mission error Attacks on Unit* (Denver: Fact-Simile Editions, 2008), xvi. Hereafter OMR.
[306] Travis Macdonald, 'The Weight of What's Left [Out]: Six Contemporary Erasurists on Their Craft', interview by Andrew David King, *The Kenyon Review*, 6 November 2012, accessed 10 January 2013, http://www.kenyonreview.org/2012/11/erasure-collaborative-interview/.
[307] OMR, 71.

puts it, 'what do *we* know and when did *we* know it?'[308] [Figure 25 and Figure 26]. As this chapter will show, the same preoccupations reverberate clearly in Macdonald's work.

FIGURE 25 TRAVIS MACDONALD, *THE O MISSION REPO*, P. XVII

[308] Robert Storr, 'Paper Trail', in *Redaction Paintings,* Jenny Holzer (New York, NY: Cheim and Read, 2006), 8.

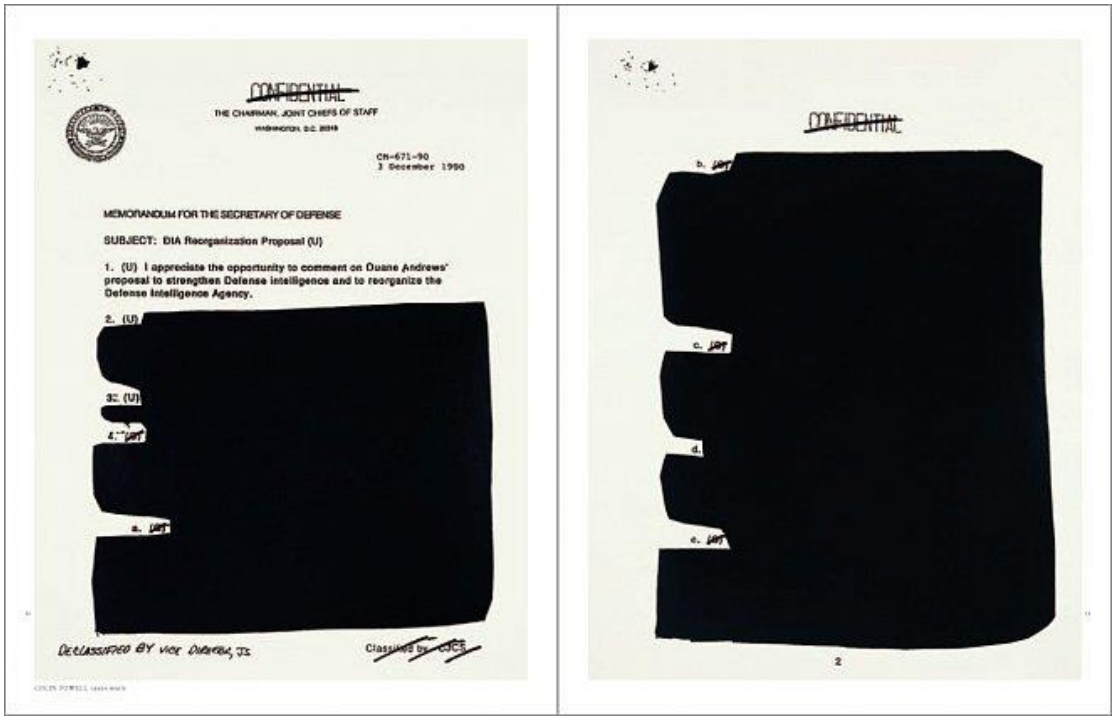


FIGURE 26 JENNY HOLZER, *REDACTION PAINTINGS*, PP. 12-13

In Chapter 1: 'We Ave Plan' (from 'We Have some Planes') the text of the report is struck through with a thick black horizontal line, and although not immediately legible, the source text still remains visible on the page [Figure 27]. The typography of this section creates a characteristic illusion; the lines obscure the removed text at the same time as preserving it on the page. Unlike the blackout of the *Reface*, this erasure method makes the text visible and invisible, legible – even if any attempt at reading the text would pose a significant challenge – and illegible at the same time. This ambiguous interplay of textual presence and absence on Macdonald's pages can be read as an echo of the journey of some of the Al Qaeda members described in the corresponding chapter of the governmental document. Just like the erased text of the report Atta, Omari, Moqed, and the 16 other hijackers identified in the document remain, in the course of their journey to stage the attacks on the World Trade Centre and The Pentagon, both visible and at the same time invisible; travelling on public transport, subject to all official security screening, recorded and at the same time ignored by the security system. The report describes the journey of one of the Al Qaeda members in the following way:

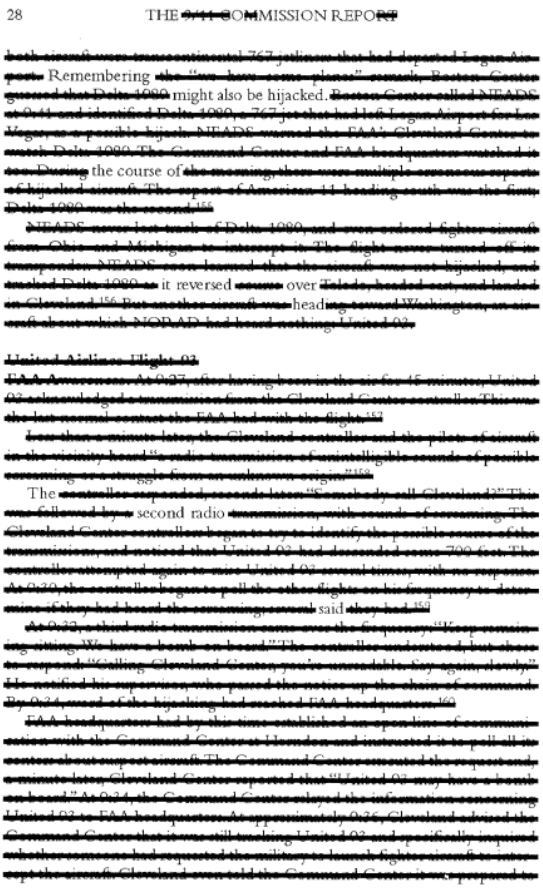
> Nawaf al Hazmi set off the alarms for both the first and second metal detectors and was then hand-wanded before being passed. In addition, his over-the-shoulder carry-on bag was swiped by an explosive trace detector and then passed. The video footage indicates that he was carrying an unidentified item in his back pocket, clipped to its rim.[309]

[309] CR, 3.

These men might seem potentially suspicious, but not suspicious enough to be noticed at the airports of Portland, Boston, and Washington, just like the text of the corresponding section of *The Repo*, visible, legible, but not legible enough to encourage engagement with words underneath the black lines that partly obliterate it. This sense of partial (in)visibility manifests itself further in the closing sections of Chapter 1 of the report, revealing a significant, if unrecorded, event in the history preceding 9/11. As the report reads:

> the conflict did not begin on 9/11. It had been publicly declared years earlier, most notably in a declaration faxed early in 1998 to an Arabic-language newspaper in London. Few Americans had noticed it. The fax had been sent from thousands of miles away by the followers of a Saudi exile in one of the most remote and impoverished countries on earth.[310]

The letter served as Bin Laden's declaration of war against America, a publication of fatwa issued in the name of World Islam Front, and an unambiguous statement on the security threat and the events to come; publically available, circulated, but not logged or addressed by the American intelligence. Present but at the same time absent.



28 THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT

Remembering the "we have some planes" remark, Boston Center quickly checked that Delta 1989 might also be hijacked. Boston Center called NEADS at 9:41 and identified Delta 1989—767 jetliner headed to Logan Airport from Las Vegas as a possible hijack. NEADS scrambled the FAA's Cleveland Center to watch Delta 1989. The Command Center and FAA headquarters watched as the course of the morning's events multiplied. Reports of hijacked aircraft. The report of American 11 heading south was the first; Delta 1989 was the second.[155]

NEADS never lost track of Delta 1989, and soon ordered fighter aircraft from Ohio and Michigan to intercept it. The flight was turned off its transponder. NEADS concluded that the aircraft was not hijacked and ordered Delta 1989 to [illegible] it reversed course over Toledo, headed east, and landed in Cleveland.[156] But another aircraft was heading toward Washington, an aircraft about which NORAD had heard nothing. United 93.

United Airlines Flight 93

FAA Washington At 9:27, after having been in the air for 45 minutes, United 93 acknowledged a transmission from the Cleveland Center controller. The next and last transmission the FAA had with the flight.[157]

Less than a minute later, the Cleveland controller and the pilots of aircraft in the vicinity heard [illegible] radio transmissions. Controllers caught snippets of possible conversation or struggle from an unknown origin.[158]

The controller responded seconds later: "Stand by, all Cleveland." This was followed by a second radio transmission, with sounds of screaming. The Cleveland Center controller began to try to identify the possible source of the transmissions and noticed that United 93 had descended some 700 feet. The controller attempted again to reach United 93 several times with no response. At 9:30 the controller began to pull the other flights in the area closer to determine if they had heard the screaming sounds. said they had.[159]

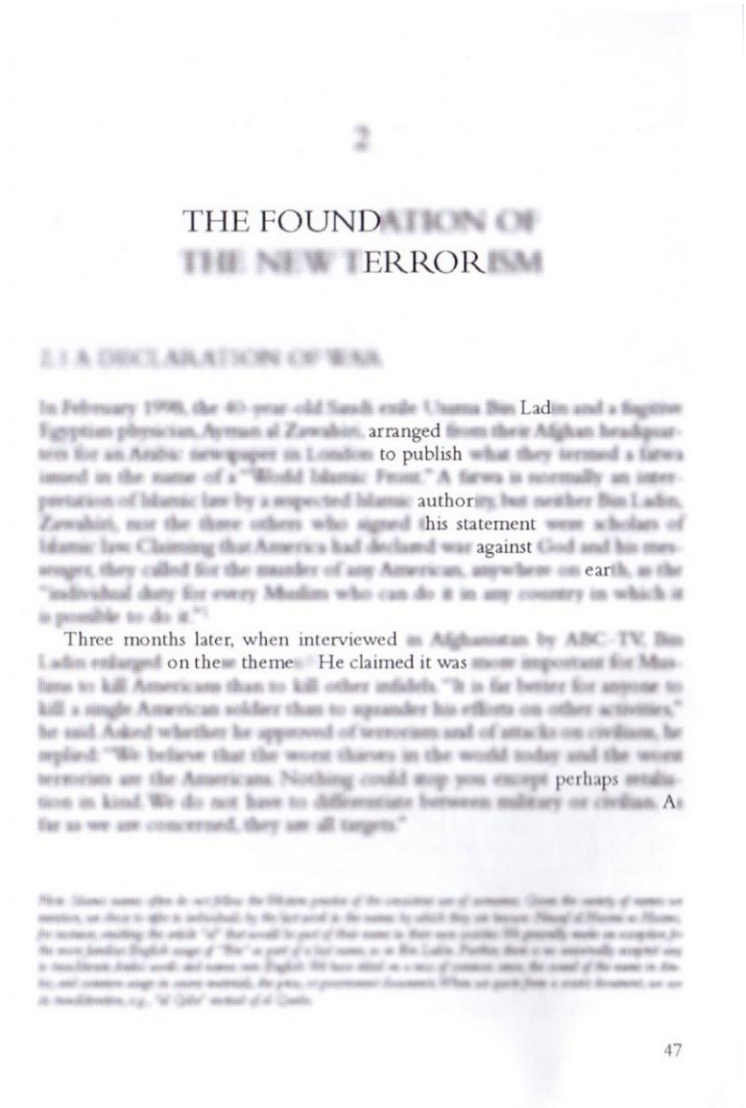
At 9:32, other radio transmissions were overheard by controllers. "Get out of here. Get out of here. We have a bomb on board." The controller responded, but there was no response to his transmission. He then tried: "Calling Cleveland Center, you're unreadable, say again clearly." He notified his supervisor, who passed the notice up the chain of command. By 9:34, word of the hijacking had reached FAA headquarters.[160]

FAA headquarters had by this time established open lines of communication with the Command Center in Herndon and instructed it to pull all its assets about suspect aircraft. The Command Center relayed the request. A minute later, Cleveland Center reported that "United 93 may have a bomb on board." At 9:34, the Command Center relayed the information concerning United 93 to FAA headquarters. At approximately 9:36, Cleveland advised the Command Center that it was still tracking United 93 and specifically reported that the airliner had requested the military to escort fighter aircraft to intercept the aircraft. Cleveland even told the Command Center it was prepared to

FIGURE 27: TRAVIS MACDONALD, *THE O MISSION REPO*, P. 28

[310] Ibid, 46.

In Chapter 2, 'The Found Error' ('The Foundation of the New Terrorism') the visible/invisible trajectory set out in Chapter 1 is further developed. The typography here relies on greying out and blurring the majority of the text of the report, left on the page but completely obscured, creating an illusion of a blurred vision, or a text projected at a far distance. The few legible words preserved here are surrounded by the illegible text [Figure 28]. The erased content remains, similarly to the 1998 letter (also discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 of the report), out of focus, present but absent, significantly looming in the background of the events that lead to 9/11 but beyond reach, almost an echo of an extreme frustration that comes with an awareness of a present evidence that cannot be uncovered, or of a text available but indecipherable.



2

THE FOUNDATION OF
THE NEW TERRORISM

2.1 A DECLARATION OF WAR

In February 1998, the 40-year-old Saudi exile Usama Bin Ladin and a fugitive Egyptian physician, Ayman al Zawahiri, arranged from their Afghan headquarters for an Arabic newspaper in London to publish what they termed a fatwa issued in the name of a "World Islamic Front." A fatwa is normally an interpretation of Islamic law by a respected Islamic authority, but neither Bin Ladin, Zawahiri, nor the three others who signed this statement were scholars of Islamic law. Claiming that America had declared war against God and his messenger, they called for the murder of any American, anywhere on earth, as the "individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it."[1]

Three months later, when interviewed in Afghanistan by ABC-TV, Bin Ladin enlarged on these themes.[2] He claimed it was more important for Muslims to kill Americans than to kill other infidels. "It is far better for anyone to kill a single American soldier than to squander his efforts on other activities," he said. Asked whether he approved of terrorism and of attacks on civilians, he replied: "We believe that the worst thieves in the world today and the worst terrorists are the Americans. Nothing could stop you except perhaps retaliation in kind. We do not have to differentiate between military or civilian. As far as we are concerned, they are all targets."

47

FIGURE 28: TRAVIS MACDONALD, *THE O MISSION REPO*, PAGE 47

Chapter 2 of the report sets out a background to the events of 9/11. It focuses on the interplay of politics and religion in Muslim communities to explain the ways in which they influenced the rise to power of Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. But, characteristically, Islam is discussed as an unknown quantity, as the unfamiliar Other far removed from the Western sensibilities, a blur in itself when considered from the Western perspective. The attitude of the West to Islam as described in the document is that of incomprehension and misunderstanding. The attitude of Bin Laden and the Muslim extremists towards the West could be described in similar terms. The 9/11 Report fashions Bin Laden as a heavily biased and misinformed individual, unaware of the reality of the West and educated to reject its values. As the report reads, commenting on the background of future Al Qaeda members, 'many of these young men, even if able to study abroad, lacked the perspective and skills needed to understand a different culture.' [311] As a result, ambiguities and contradictions manifested in the juxtaposition of such contrasting worldviews pervade the pages of the report. As an example, what Bin Laden describes as a 'crystal clear' fatwa,[312] is represented in the report as a 'self-styled,' [313] unfounded attempt at claiming leadership in the Muslim world. Here, an impossibility of arriving at any shared meaning becomes apparent, turning, as *The Repo* comments, belief into 'a condition/ of ignorance'[314] and the attacks themselves, as well as the response and reaction to them, into a 'failure of imagination,' [315] later evoked in the blurred pages of Macdonald's erasure.

[311] CR, 54.
[312] Ibid, 70.
[313] Ibid, 48.
[314] Ibid, 51.
[315] As the Executive Summary of the 9/11 Report reads: 'Across the government, there were failures of imagination, policy, capabilities, and management. [...] The most important failure was one of imagination. [...] Terrorism was not the overriding national security concern for the U.S. government under either the Clinton or the pre-9/11 Bush administration. The policy challenges were linked to this failure of imagination. Officials in both the Clinton and Bush administrations regarded a full U.S. invasion of Afghanistan as practically inconceivable before 9/11 [The 9/11 Commission Report: Executive Summary, accessed 21 August 2013, http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report_Exec.pdf].

FIGURE 29 TRAVIS MACDONALD, *THE O MISSION REPO*, P. 74

Chapter 3, 'Errorism Evolves' ('Counterterrorism Evolves') is an erasure in the most established, familiar, sense, where the erased text is also completely removed, leaving blanks on the page to mark the space occupied by the original text. Here, 'the/structure/remain[s] largely unaltered/between the cracks,'[316] evoking Johnson's technique in *Radi os*. [Figure 29]. Again, a clear parallel can be drawn between the form of *The Repo* and the content of the 9/11 Report. While Chapter 2 of the report focuses on the 'the growth of a new kind of terrorism, and a new terrorist

[316] OMR, 105.

organisation,'[317] Chapter 3 traces 'the parallel evolution of government efforts to counter terrorism by Islamic extremists against United States.'[318] The analysis in Chapter 3 brings to the fore a troubling image of failed governance and security structures; driven by false assumptions, unfounded beliefs, insufficient guidance, training, and technology. As the report reads, 'the FBI lacked the ability to know what it knew: there was no effective mechanism for capturing or sharing its institutional knowledge.'[319] This was, so it seems, a system of failures of imagination, a system that 'had many holes,'[320] systematic holes that are explicitly evoked, I suggest, in the corresponding section of *The Repo*. The metaphorical holes of the report materialise on the pages of *The Repo*, where the absence described in the report becomes present – the blanks on the page turn into an echo and a literal rendering of the governance cracks and fissures set out in the 9/11 document.

Chapter 3 of Macdonald's erasure parallels and at the same time subverts the narrative created in the corresponding chapter of the report. *The Repo's* Chapter 3 aims to 'trace the parallel evolution of/Unit.'[321] It evokes the manner in which the report traces the evolution of counterterrorism as a parallel development of terrorism, discussed in Chapter 2. Unit is introduced as one of the *The Repo's* protagonists, an alter-ego of Lad, who features prominently in Macdonald's Chapter 2. As *The Repo* describes Unit and Lad, these 'characters are institutions/adapted/from the old to the new,'[322] created *sous rature*, in an iterative process of erasure of key terms and names featured in the report, with Unit, a reiteration by erasure of 'United (States)' and Lad an appropriation of 'Osama Bin Laden.' As such, the focus in Chapters 2 and 3 of *The Repo* on Lad and Unit respectively parallels the preoccupations of corresponding chapters of the report. While the report's interest in Bin Laden's rise to power and the related development of terrorism translates into an erasure focusing on Lad's story, the section devoted to the augmentation of methods of counterterrorism is mirrored in the chapter focusing on Unit. Interestingly, this framework of apparent sameness opens space for an exploration in conceptual difference. It emerges as a tool of subversive critique formulated by iterative means. While the report sets out a clear-cut binary division between the terrorism of Bin Laden (Chapter 2) and the resulting counterterrorist activities instigated by the government of the United States (Chapter 3), placing the two in an unambiguous opposition in an almost formulaic fight of good

[317] CR, 71.
[318] Ibid, 70.
[319] Ibid, 77.
[320] Ibid, 95.
[321] Ibid, 71.
[322] OMR, 71.

versus evil, *The Repo* puts this dichotomy into question. Treated under erasure, both 'terrorism' and 'counterterrorism' are erased to create the same term, both turn into and are as a result explored as forms of an 'error'. In *The Repo* the distinction established in the report disappears; activities identified as terrorism and counterterrorism by Kean and Hamilton can no longer be qualified as distinctive. This trajectory is also manifested in the titles of Macdonald's Chapters 2 and 3; inherently interdependent and pointing to an organic development from the 'found error' (Chapter 2) to its unfolding in Chapter 3, in which the 'errorism evolves'. As such, Macdonald's 'errorism' can be considered an echo of all those developments and undertakings – the report's commission becomes a source of multiple omissions, both terror and counterterrorism turn into an error – both a result of lapses of judgement and governance.

But these omissions, distortions, compromises and procedural failings all converge to generate the official history. Records of oral histories of the events, as recounted by firefighters, paramedics and emergency medical technicians, although available, are omitted from the official recorded narrative.[323] By preserving only selected truths, convenient truths, authorised and recognised by those in power, the document turns into an instrument of cultural hegemony and a tool of manipulating knowledge. The archival project here emerges as a mode of forgetting rather than remembering, encouraging a collective cultural amnesia. The material which is recorded, disseminated and made available to the public to shape the collective cultural and historical conscience seems to evoke those declassified documents Holzer appropriates in her *Redaction Paintings*. But while Holzer and Macdonald make the erasure visible, the report is construed as a complete erasure, edited and formatted to erase the acts of erasure involved in censoring all the material marginalised in the process. Here, occlusion of information rather than access to it emerges as the most powerful tool.

If, as *The Repo* reads, 'The I/lacked the ability to know what it knew: there was no effective mechanism for/knowledge,'[324] then writing *sous rature* could be considered a response to this lack; 'a system to facilitate creation.'[325] The form of

[323] Records of oral histories of the events of 9/11 as recounted by 503 firefighters and medical staff were released on 12 August 2005. These were compiled by the New York City Fire Department beginning October 2001 but were not used for official purpose and not made available to the public until 2005. *The New York Times* proved instrumental in the process of making these public. The paper's attempt to obtain the records in 2002, under the Freedom of Information Act, was refused by the Bloomberg administration, resulting in a law suit against the city. In 2005 the court of Appeals ordered the city to release most, but not all, of the previously classified records.
[324] OMR, 77.
[325] Ibid, 76.

writing *sous rature* draws attention to the content of the source and the methods of its compilation. The blurred page of *The Repo* becomes a particularly striking rendering of what the report really is, when what remains after arduous editing are only those few legible words, or rather words that are approved as readily and appropriately legible. The transformation of the 9/11 Report into *The Repo* can be seen as a statement on the impossibility of any attempt at uncovering the events leading to 9/11. More broadly, it evokes the nature of archiving, archive's manifestation of law's authority, and law's limited facility for assembling the archive. Viewed as such, *The Repo* and, as I will argue in more detail later in the chapter, M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!,* both emerge as manifestations of a particularly Derridean distrust of the concept of history – history conceived of as ultimate reality and a source of authorised meanings and imposed truths. Erasure seen as such is a tool of accessing the otherwise unavailable knowledge and a method offering alternative means of remembering. In Hal Foster's words, it is an exercise 'in alternative knowledge or counter memory,'[326] with a capacity to respond to the void, be it cultural or historical, with another void, one created by gaps on the page that hide existing texts and at the same time reveal new meanings. Here, to paraphrase Dworkin, the potential of erasure to both obliteratre and reveal becomes most apparent: 'omissions within the system,' Dworkin writes, 'permit other elements to appear all the more clearly.'[327] In Macdonald's narrative, an attempt at reading between the lines of official history emerges, the alleged certainties of the seemingly objective historical narrative as well as any possibility of access to it are shaken. Instead, an alternative history surfaces, written 'against/fact/against/form.' [328] Through its acknowledgement and the same time rejection of the source, *The Repo* becomes 'the/unprecedented step of/witness,'[329] a testimony not to either the official or the alternative history alone but one that oscillates somewhere between both, one that strives to 'explain the world/in/mixed history.'[330]

When considered within such a deconstructive framework, Chapter 4, 'Re Po in A' ('Responses to Al Qaeda's Initial Assaults') could be viewed as a meditation on the constructedness of meaning and performativity of discourse. The formal qualities of Chapter 4 derive from a reference to the word 'score' as it appears in the closing section of Chapter 3 of the report. The passage in question reads: 'Beginning in 1999, the reports of these commissions made scores of recommendations to address

[326] Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October*, 110 (2004), 4.
[327] Dworkin, *No Medium*, 9.
[328] OMR, 60.
[329] Ibid, 104.
[330] Ibid, 51.

terrorism and homeland security but drew little attention from Congress. Most of their impact came after 9/11.'[331] These 'scores', subject to Macdonald's iterative treatment, turn into a musical score in Chapter 4 of *The Repo*, where the erased text is inscribed into its lines [Figure 30]. The parallel narrative is created here by a semiotic manipulation of decontextualised meaning. The word 'score' is approached as a signifier read out of context, raising question about constructedness of discourse and reliability of information communicated via the report itself. Foregrounded here is the logic of signification that is implicit in all language iterated by means of erasure, where identical words create different meanings. Decontextualised, the erased discourse generates difference out of sameness, where meaning is determined by, to turn to Jonathan Culler, 'double movement inside and outside previous categories and distinctions,'[332] inside and outside text. Here, 'the new context creates new opportunities for obnoxious behaviour'[333] and facilitates possibilities for alternative modes of creativity and authorship to emerge.

The musical score as a paratextual device is also of further significance here. There is a characteristic musical motif running through *The Repo*. Reducing the report's 'operations' to *The Repo's* 'opera', Macdonald constructs the story of Unit and Lad as a performance, stressing, I suggest, the artificiality of this story, any story; turning facts into performed acts and a political crisis into an aesthetic experience. Seen as such, the entire text of *The Repo* performs, through erasure writing, a range of acts of erasure inscribed into the recorded history of 9/11 and subsumed by the process of writing the report. Chapter 4 of the report is, in fact, peppered with discourse of erasure; 'President Clinton crossed out key language he had approved in December and inserted more ambiguous language,'[334] 'dismantling of the camp erased a possible site for targeting Bin Ladin.'[335] Treated *sous rature,* these events turn into events of writing; they transform into an opera, or 'a drama/which provides/Constraints/for errorism,'[336] bringing to the fore the fact that 'the prose/had been misused.'[337] As such, *The Repo's* Chapter 4 combines the two concepts, treating both the report and its erasure as performances, both manipulated by and manipulating meaning, in the process turning erasure writing into a performative act

[331] CR, 107.
[332] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 150.
[333] Ibid, 125.
[334] CR, 133.
[335] Ibid, 138. The two spellings: Bin Laden and Bin Ladin are used interchangeably in the report. This is due to the lack of accepted standards for transliterating Arabic names.
[336] OMR, 78.
[337] Ibid.

itself.[338] Hence, the relationship between the report's Chapter 4 and its iteration could be read as an act of performative re-writing, from operation to opera, a performance inscribed into a musical score, performing those acts of erasure made apparent in the report. Here, the play of and with the signifier becomes synonymous with writing under erasure.

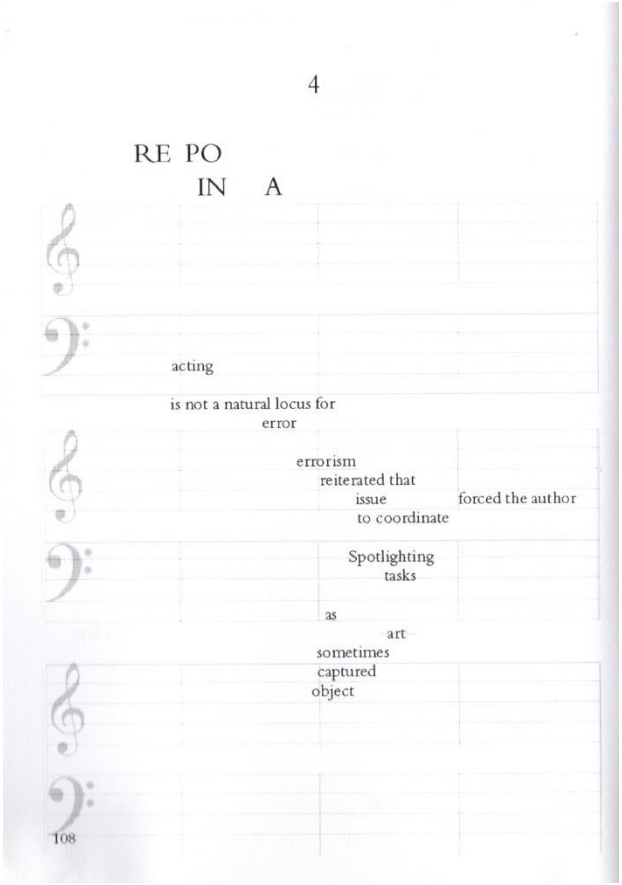


FIGURE 30: TRAVIS MACDONALD, *THE O MISSION REPO*, P. 108

Characteristically, in the report *sous rature*, the nature of authorship and attribution changes. 'The act of erasure,' as Macdonald declares, 'seems to transcend the traditional boundaries of authorship.'[339] The opening line of the report's preface reads: 'We present the narrative of this report and the recommendations that flow from it to the President of the United States, the United States Congress, and the American people for their consideration.'[340] Erased, the excerpt turns into 'we the narrative of America.'[341] This iteration triggers a shift in subjectivity and focalisation. The transition from the 9/11 Report to *The Repo* manifests a move away from the authority of the clearly defined, ultimate, authorial persona and towards the more

[338] I consider performativity an important feature of writing at the Iterative turn and discuss it in more detail in Chapter 4, with reference to code poetry.
[339] Macdonald, 'The Weight'.
[340] CR, xv.
[341] OMR, xv.

ambiguous, collective, communal, fluid agency of the voice that emerges in the process of iterative writing. The voice of 'we the narrative' is a subject that alters, on a textual level, but also symbolically; 'the (narrative of) America' inevitably transforms as a result of 9/11 events described in the report; as *The Repo* reads 'we emerge from this/or/into this/as others.'[342] The act of erasure is not limited here to an appropriation of the text on the page but also involves an erasure of authorship. The names of the 9/11 Report's authors, featured in the preface to the document, are completely blacked out. And although Macdonald is listed as an author of *The Repo* on the cover, no explicit claim of authorship is made. Instead, a figure of an anonymous author is featured in the text, introduced as one of the three main characters, alongside Lad and Unit. This inclusion opens space for a range of metatextual comments on erasure, which feature prominently in the text. This approach turns *The Repo* into a manifesto of erasure. Foregrounding the self-conscious engagement with the laws of the genre, *The O Mission Repo* 'define[s] the elements of/art.'[343] Erasure here is conceptualised as a method of both creative and critical writing. It 'dissolve[s]/the/Author [...] [the] story/into/analogous/States/of/criticism.'[344] This removal of the figure of the author is an important gesture and points to an approach to textuality removed from the paradigmatic origins and, hence, notions of originality.

This reconceptualization of the familiar categories of creativity is made possible here due to the nature of the source text. The cultural function of iteration changes where an extra-literary material is concerned, as does the nature of authorship. As Macdonald observes, 'the very idea of language ownership is a political act which erasure seeks to subvert.'[345] Writing documents under erasure creates an alternative space of authorship, or 'protection/areas for/author to police/the torn/and limiting language.'[346] But this form of control over the text is inherently ambiguous. And so is the figure of the author, claiming authorship over the erased text – over the holes – but at the same time disturbing and disrupting the authority of the document and of those who created it, policing and rioting at the same time, pertaining to minimalism and excess simultaneously, constantly driven by 'the impact of the post,'[347] post-9/11, post-copyright, the impact of postproduction condition at the Iterative turn.

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[342] Ibid, xvii-iii.
[343] Ibid, 101.
[344] Ibid, 89.
[345] Macdonald, 'The Weight'.
[346] OMR, 101.
[347] Ibid, 90.

Copyright issues further illuminate the relationship between the source and the erased text of *The Repo*. Characteristically, Macdonald sought no permissions to reproduce or adopt the report. It is his citizen rights, Macdonald claims, that allow him access to the material: 'since I was not erasing a literary text, I justified the act with the fact that my taxpayer dollars had paid for both the compilation and production of the document at hand so I consider myself by all rights, part owner of the original 9/11 Commission Report.'[348] Regardless of Macdonald's stand, *The Repo* acknowledges its source and incorporates the following disclaimer note on the copyright page:

> the following document, though composed from the partially erased pages of The 9/11 Commission Report, does not represent the views or conclusions of any entity other than the "author", Travis Macdonald. As an artistic adaptation of a public document, it makes no claim to government sponsorship, affiliation or representation of any sortbeyondthatofapatrioticcitizenexercisinghisindividualrighttofrees pech.[349]

The note is included in a response to copyright constraints and regulations that govern the publishing market. It is an attempt at avoiding a copyright controversy as a result of using, as Macdonald claims he did, a text that is protected under copyright law. However, Macdonald's assumptions about potential copyright issues are misguided. His source document is, in fact, not copyrighted. The copyright page of the official version of the 9/11 Report lists only manufacturers, designers and production staff, copyright holders are not included. This is not at all an unusual approach to intellectual property rights. The 9/11 Report belongs to the category of texts exempt from copyright. It is a work of the United States government and as such, under section 105 of the Copyright Act, the work is not entitled to copyright protection.[350] Some works issued by the U.S. government can be copyrighted, if these are created by an independent contractor and not a government's employee. This is however not the case here. All the members of the 9/11 Commission served, at the time of the report's compilation, as members of the U.S. government, making the

[348] Macdonald, 'The Weight'.
[349] The lack of spacing here reflects the original typography of the copyright page.
[350] The Commission's website reads: 'the Commission respectfully requests that the edition clearly state that the report differs from its original form' [Frequently Asked Questions about the 9/11 Commission Report, accessed 30 August 2013, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/faqs.htm]. The U.S. federal law only imposes this limitation as far as domestic copyright goes. The U.S. government can still hold the copyright to those works outside of the USA. This however, does not affect Macdonald's work. As *The Repo* is a work created and published in the U.S., the rule about the noncopyright status of the Report applies.

report a work of U.S. government.[351] The official website of the National Commission explicitly states that 'the Commission's final report is a public document. There are no copyright restrictions or laws governing the translation and publication of the final report.'[352] As a result, no one can be granted exclusive publication or translation rights.

Although any alterations of the original in subsequent publications have to be acknowledged,[353] the approach builds on assumptions of fair use and fair dealing principles and is a courtesy request rather than a legal restriction. As such, Macdonald's disclaimer is significant though not necessary and plays a role in the publication of *The Repo* for reasons other than those foregrounded by the author. Dealing with a source ineligible for copyright protection means issues of ownership are not a concern. As such, Macdonald's declarations presenting *The Repo* as a platform for exercising his citizen, taxpayer rights and related copyright concerns prove misguided. Dealing with such non-literary material, however, raises a range of different, though no less significant, issues. Question of ethics inherent in the artistic licence that the practice exploits become of primary concern instead (an issue discussed in more detail with reference to Philip's *Zong*!). The history uncovered in *The Repo* draws attention to aspects of the report and the history of 9/11 specifically but also points to issues inherent in the nature of collective memory and cultural remembering that cannot be copyrighted.

2.5. M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*

A similar sense of history instilled with error is evoked in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*. Like *The O Mission Repo, Zong!* is a project of iterative documentary poetics, an appropriation of a case report of *Gregson* v. *Gilbert* (1783), frequently referred to as the *Zong* case, a seminal trial in the abolitionist movement against slavery and slave trade. *Zong* was a slave ship that sailed from the West Coast of Africa to Jamaica in 1781 with a cargo of 470 slaves. As a result of captain's navigational errors the journey lasted over 4 months, instead of planned 6–8 weeks, posing challenges to the available resources on board. During the time, some of the slaves were taken ill, others removed from the ship under captain's orders. The *Gregson* case centred on a massacre of some 150 slaves aboard the ship, though not treated as such. Under

[351] Section 101 of Copyright Act defines work of the United States Government as 'a work prepared by an officer or employee of the United States Government as part of that person's official duties.'
[352] Frequently Asked Questions.
[353] Ibid.

contemporary maritime law slaves on board were considered cargo and all cargo was insured. As Philip explains, the captain's rationale behind throwing slaves overboard, and thus destroying his cargo, was an attempt at arriving at the most financially advantageous outcome of the voyage: 'if the African slaves on board die a natural death, the owner of the ship will have to bear the cost, but if they were "thrown alive into the sea, it would be the loss of the underwriters."'[354] Hence, *Gregson* v. *Gilbert* was an insurance case, an attempt 'to recover the value of certain slaves thrown overboard for want of water,'[355] a suit over loss of cargo, loss of property, and not loss of human lives.

Zong's! source is a two-page, 500-word report recording the case, subsequently subject to a range of erasure procedures; a text blacked out, whited out, mutilated, and cut and pasted to create a collection of poems. As Philip explains, the report is 'a word store'[356] where the legal text parallels 'a certain kind of entity – a whole, a completeness'[357] which, in the process of its iteration, 'is rent and torn.'[358] The method is adopted here to consciously echo the experience of Africans on board of the ship. *Zong!* exemplifies writing in fragments, on the level of individual poems and where the volume as a whole is concerned. The text of *Zong!* is divided into seven parts ('Os', 'Dicta', 'Sal', 'Ventus', 'Ratio', 'Ferrum', and 'Ebora'), engaging a range of different erasure techniques, followed by a glossary of words used in the poem, and a 'Manifest', which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The opening section, 'Os' (Latin for bone), comprises twenty-six numbered poems. 'Os' is the only section in the volume composed using words lifted directly from *Gregson* v. *Gilbert* without any further lexical modifications. All the subsequent sections rely on further authorial interventions and appropriations of the source, instances of what Philip describes as acts of 'breaking and entering' the text to release new meanings. As the sections progress, the language becomes increasingly disjointed and illegible, descending into incomprehension that culminates in 'Ebora'. As Andrew David King puts it, 'like bureaucratic language that empties itself of meaning intentionally, *Zong!* empties words of their meaning this way and achieves a sort of purity in sound.'[359] 'Sal' (salt), 'Ventus' (wind), 'Ratio' (reason) and 'Ferrum'

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354 M. NourbeSe Philip, 'Notanda', in *Zong!* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 189. Hereafter N.
355 *Gregson v. Gilbert*, in M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 210.
356 N, 191.
357 Ibid, 192.
358 Ibid.
359 Andrew David King, 'Politics, Erasure and a 'sometimes genuine music', *The Kenyon Review*, 25 October 2012, accessed 28 January 2013, http://www.kenyonreview.org/2012/10/politics-erasure-and-a-sometimes-genuine-music/.

(iron) represent a complex linguistic exercise. Words used to compose these four sections are derived from Philip's *Zong!* dictionaries – compilations of words collected and extracted from the source text. As Philip explains: 'I devise a dictionary with a list of each of the "mother" words followed by the words contained in that particular word – for instance, apprehension yields hen, sion, pare, and pear, to list a few possibilities.'[360] In the process, a plethora of words is generated in languages other than English, ranging from French and Dutch through Arabic, Hebrew to West African Patois, Shona and Yoruba, all listed in the dictionary printed as an appendix to the poem and echoing the potential polyphony on board the *Zong*.

A range of Latin terms also emerges in the process of Philip's lexical extraction. These are used as titles for the first six sections of *Zong!*. As Philip explains, this choice is significant in that Latin serves as a way of emphasising the underlying connection with law and legal discourse in *Zong!*. 'Ebora' (Yoruban for underwater spirits) is the only section to escape the dominant linguistic framework. This choice of the title is indicative, I suggest, of the content of the section and its status within the volume as a whole. 'Ebora' is illegible, printed in faded, grey ink, with overlapping layers of text, printed over lines of other text [Figure 31]. These words negate any possibility of communication and defy conventions of reading and writing. They function outside the authority of the official language, law and the dominant legal discourse as an embodiment of the voices silenced on board the *Zong*, reflecting the impossibility of telling the story.

In a reversal of the textual dynamic governing the first six sections, 'Ebora' struggles with an excess of language, but the increasingly busy page only generates yet another silence; one born out of powerless, disregarded discourse from outside the recognised authority frameworks. It seems to echo the polyphony that shaped the linguistic situation on board the *Zong*. 'Ebora', then, becomes synonymous with a search for meaning when language is heard but cannot be comprehended, generating a silence manifested not in an act of an erasure of language but through its supplementation. This silence echoes Blanchot's understanding of the idea of silence as a voiceless cry that 'tends to exceed language, even if it lends itself to recuperation of language effect.' It is, as Blanchot writes, 'a meaning infinitely suspended, decried, decipherable-indecipherable.'[361] The meaning of 'Ebora' resides in the noise of this silence. The section proves a particularly explicit manifestation of the *Zong's!* poetics; '*Zong!*,' as Philip describes it, 'is a chant! Shout! An ululation! *Zong!* Is moan! Mutter!

[360] N, 200.
[361] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 51.

Howl! And shriek! *Zong!* is "pure utterance." *Zong!* is a song [...] of the untold story.'[362] 'Ebora' as an echo of the multiple silenced narratives can be read as manifestation of a memory formulated on the margins of recorded history, an impossible, alternative, attempt at documenting the lost oral histories of those silenced in the wake of the *Zong* massacre. The act of erasure here is associated not with a removal of language but rather with the impossibility of its comprehension. But the preoccupation with silence and its potential to signify in 'Ebora' is evocative of broader project of meaning making in *Zong!*. A clear parallel can be drawn between visual gaps on the page and silences characteristic of the story of the *Zong*. 'Within the boundaries established by the words and their meanings there are,' Philip writes, 'silences; within each silence is the poem, which is revealed only when the text is fragmented and mutilated, mirroring the fragmentation and mutilation that slavery perpetrated on Africans.'[363] Erasure as a mode of writing materialises the silence; it turns into a visual representation of the inaudible – lending, to borrow from Foucault, 'speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say.'[364]

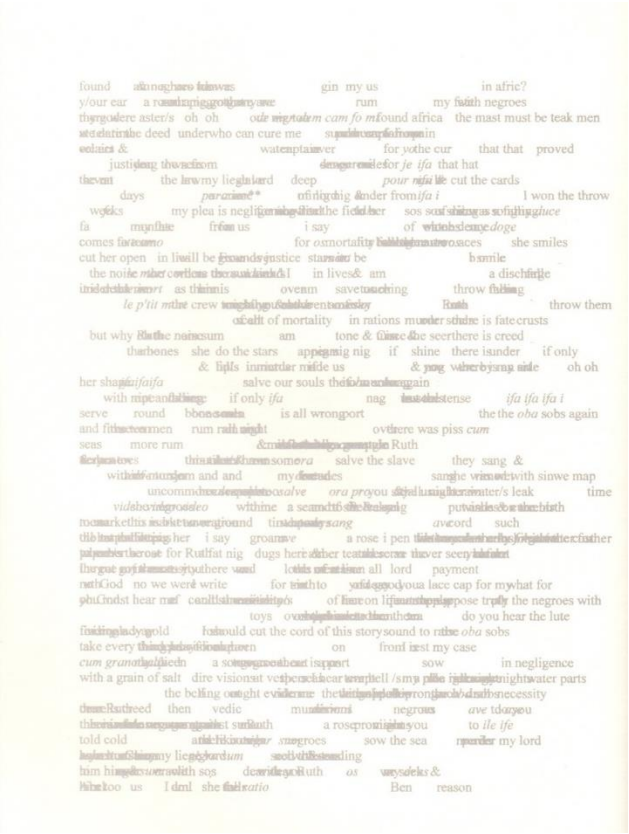

FIGURE 31: M.NOURBESE PHILIP, 'EBORA', IN *ZONG!*

[362] N, 207.
[363] Ibid, 195.
[364] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 7. Hereafter AK.

The song, music, noise are all significant in the context. Similarly to Johnson, Philip derives her complex iteration methodology from classical music, pointing to the fugue as a useful frame for understanding the nature of her poetics. Inherent in the fugue compositional practice is the notion of imitation. The fugue is a 'procedure of imitative counterpoint, in which the theme is stated successively in all voices of the polyphonic texture, tonally established, continuously expanded, opposed, and reestablished.'[365] As such, the point of the fugue is for the voices to enter successively and in imitation of each other.[366] Similarly, the story of the *Zong* as re-written by Philip is an exercise in repetition and imitation, a reiteration of the original text of *Gregson* v. *Gilbert*, of the original *Zong* story, and at the same time a repetition of each subsequent section of *Zong!*, where the text is continuously re-iterated. Unlike *The Repo* in which each page of the report is used once only, *Zong!* continuously reworks its source; just like the fugue, it is always expanded, continually supplemented, opposed and re-established. To quote Philip, '*Zong!* is a counterpointed, fugal anti-narrative in which several strands are simultaneously at work [...] *Zong!* is a sustained repetition or reiteration of various themes, phrases and voices, albeit fragmented.'[367]

Interestingly, in 'Notanda' Philip points to another meaning associated with the fugue; the fugue as a state of amnesia:

> it is erasure and forgetting of the be-ing and humanity of the Africans on board of the *Zong*, the legal text of *Gregson v. Gilbert* becomes a representation of the fugal state of amnesia, serving as a mechanism for erasure and alienation [...] the original text becomes a fugal palimpsest through which *Zong!* is allowed to heal the original text of its fugal amnesia.[368]

The type of amnesia to which Philip refers here, the so-called fugue state or dissociative fugue, is reversible. A recovery from the disorder equals an intact return of lost memories. As such, Philip's *Zong!* can be considered an impossible project of mirroring this process of recovery, with repetition turning into a tool for rediscovering those lost memories, a repetition as a method of driving 'the event and the memory simultaneously.'[369]

Working with erasure technique, Philip, like Macdonald, brings attention to issues of impediments of language that restrict the possibility of remembering, of the

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[365] Fugue, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).
[366] Fugue, *Oxford Music Online*, accessed 21 August 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e4041 .
[367] N, 204.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid, 201.

constraints of writing and the utopianism of the idea of freedom of expression. As Philip explains:

> The two page report [...] sets out the fact situation and the reasons for the decision. When first faced with the decision [...], I was convinced that the stories of the events that took place on board of the *Zong!* were locked in those two pages: my challenge was to figure out a way to get to those stories.[370]

What transpires here is an assumption that the report is already an erased document. Erasure, Philip seems to suggest, is inherent to legal discourse. A characteristic mode of writing under constraint, legal writing relies on removing all inessential material, affective content and context to arrive, in Philip's words, at 'desiccated principle of law.'[371] Hence, Philip's mode of erasure, similar to Macdonald's practice, is an erasure of an erasure, an attempt at dissecting 'the layers of erasure to get to that ghostly palimpsest.'[372] But this multilayered mode of appropriation serves as a method of uncovering that which might have been cancelled by the initial process of erasure, a method of reintroducing the emotions, feelings, and personal stories removed from the official report.

This distinction between the legal and poetic discourse is helpful here and can be expanded, I suggest, to include different categories of personhood as a means of differentiating between the two approaches to writing the story of the *Zong*. Philip's engagement with the *Gregson* v. *Gilbert* case can be interpreted as an attempt at questioning legal categories of personhood. If read as such, the preoccupation with the individual in *Zong!,* as juxtaposed with the anonymity of the subject in *Gregson,* marks a departure from the categories of constitutional personhood – from the individual as a subject of rights – to an interest in the more inclusive, fluid and open lyrical modes of engagement with identity and being. This shift is evocative of Barbara Johnson's, taxonomy distinguishing between legal and lyric persons. As Johnson points out, 'lyric and law might be seen as two very different ways of instating what a "person" is. There appears to be the greatest possible discrepancy between a lyric "person" – emotive, subjective, individual – and a legal "person" – rational, rights-bearing, institutional.'[373] Through her juxtaposition of lyric and law Johnson (and, I suggest, Philip) is implicitly asking 'whether there is a relation between the "first

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[370] M. NourbeSe Philip, 'The Weight of What's Left [Out]: Six Contemporary Erasurists on Their Craft', interview by Andrew David King, *The Kenyon Review*, 6 November 2012, accessed 10 January 2013, http://www.kenyonreview.org/2012/11/erasure-collaborative-interview/.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid.
[373] Barbara Johnson, 'Anthropomorphism in Lyric and Law', *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*, 10.2 (1998), 550.

person" (the grammatical "I") and the "constitutional person" (the subject of rights).'[374] Seen as such, *Zong!*, and erasure in general, emerge as a means of bearing 'this story which can't be told, which must be told, but through not telling.'[375] Writing in *Zong!* turns into a form of recovery of personhood. It is an act of assignation of identity to those previously de-humanised by the linguistic, cultural and political situation and, subsequently, by the discourse of the case report.

Devoid of the status of a legal person, slaves on slave ships were typically treated solely as cargo, and although, as Sarah Dowling stresses, 'many forms of actuarial listing took place on slave ships, slaves' names were never recorded,'[376] placing them outside of the official discourse, outside of history, now simply a lacuna in the fragmented narratives of the *Zong*. The story of the *Zong*, transformed in *Zong!,* emerges as a response to that lack. Key to Philip's approach and to *Zong's* engagement in forms of lyrical personhood are acts of naming treated as a liberating force. In *Zong!* naming becomes synonymous with a possibility of extracting personhood from an impersonal, objectifying frame of legal property discourse. This approach is particularly prominent in 'Os'. Characteristically, each page of the 'Os' section is accompanied by a footnote listing names of a few slaves, 228 in total [Figure 32]. But these remain speculative, hypothetical names, derived from beyond the archive, from the margins of memory. They can be interpreted as names of lyric rather than legal persons. Where access to the actual archive and to identities of legal persons proves an impossibility, the actual individuals are represented as abstract, textual entities, surfacing as 'footnotes floating below the text.'[377] This writing which relies on acts of iteration and excavation at the same time can be seen as an attempt at saving the drowned, who inevitably (to echo Primo Levi) cannot take the place of the saved, even as lyric persons, always a 'ghostly palimpsest' to the main text of *Zong!* and, by analogy, to history.

The archive of the recorded history – here the text of the case report – plays a crucial role in the possibility of dealing in counter-memory. Those unrecorded narratives, are never fully removed from the strands of official history; instead they remain, Philip seems to suggest, always present, always inscribed into the framework of the recorded facts, a footnote to them. Representative of that approach, all names, just like the entire text of *Zong!*, are derived from the words of *Gregson* case, echoing

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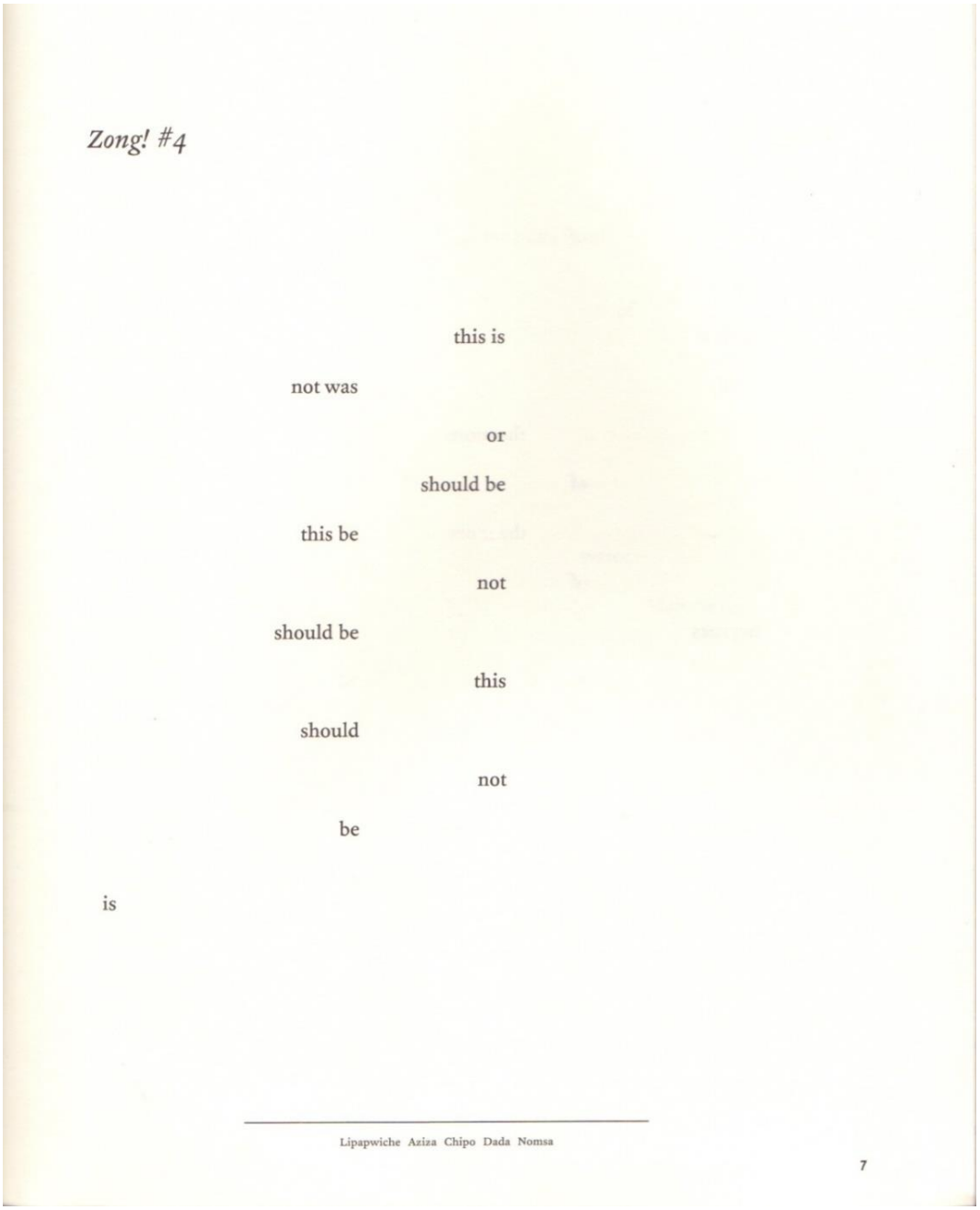
[374] Ibid, 556.
[375] M. NourbeSe Philip, 'Defending the Dead, Confronting the Archive: A Conversation with M. NourbeSe Philip', interview by Patricia Saunders, *Small Axe*, 12.2 (2008), 72.
[376] Sarah Dowling, 'Persons and Voices: Sounding Impossible Bodies in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*', *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review*, 210/211 (2011), 47.
[377] N, 200.

the broader take on the dynamics of iterative writing. What comes to the fore as a result are the shared identities – the intertwined nature of legal and lyric personhood – and an impossibility of separating the two, here represented through the lexicon of the same word store. The key questions that emerge as a result pertain to the possibility of determining the origins of these stories; who writes them?; who writes these names, Philip seems to be asking, 'is it another member of the crew? I don't know – it must be told; it can never be told.'[378]



Zong! #4

this is

not was

or

should be

this be

not

should be

this

should

not

be

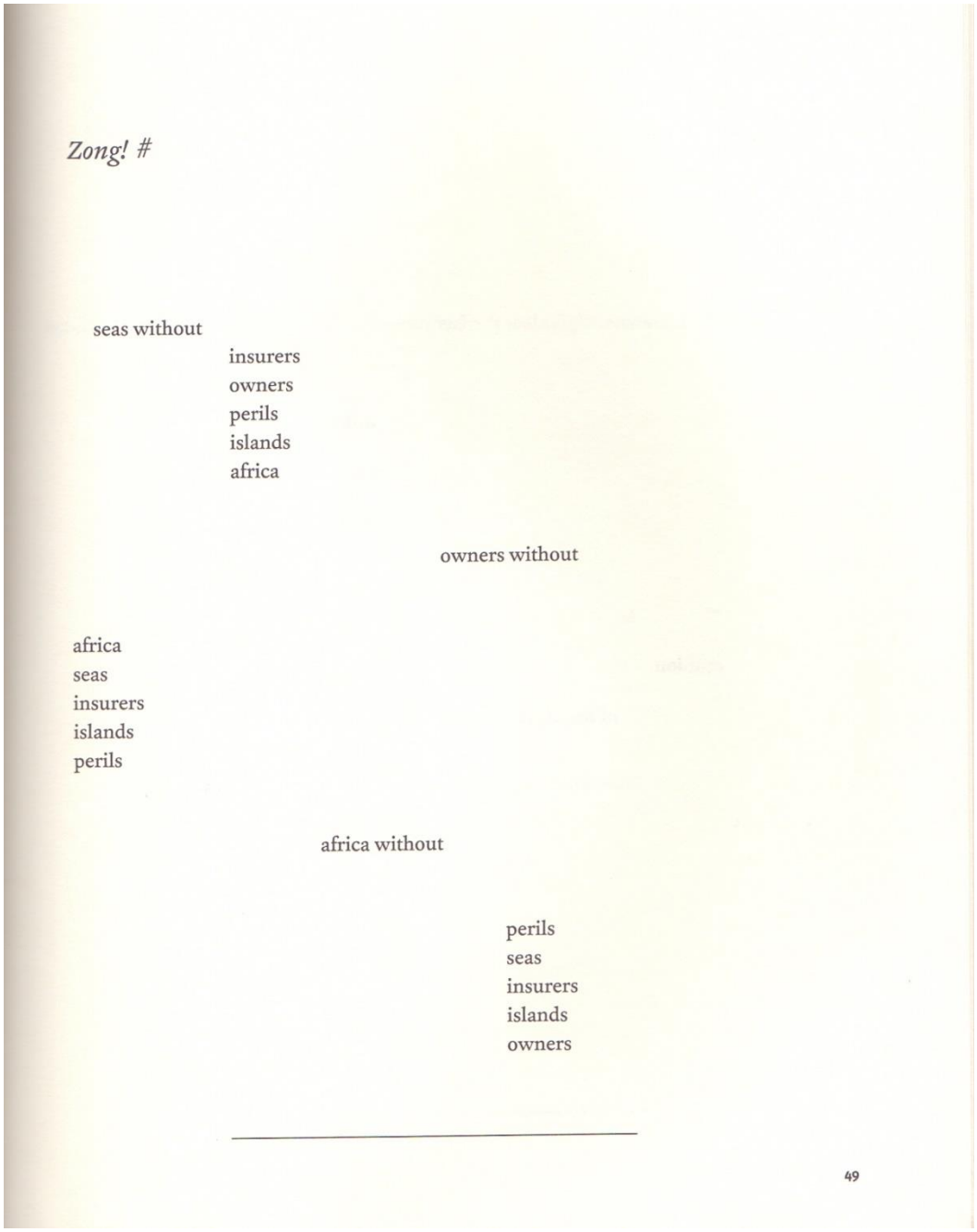
is

Lipapwiche Aziza Chipo Dada Nomsa

7

FIGURE 32: M. NOURBESE PHILIP, 'OS', IN *ZONG!*

[378] M. NourbeSe Philip, email to author, 08 March 2013.



Zong! #

seas without
insurers
owners
perils
islands
africa

owners without

africa
seas
insurers
islands
perils

africa without

perils
seas
insurers
islands
owners

49

FIGURE 33: M.NOURBESE PHILIP, 'DICTA', IN *ZONG!*

A similar act of footnoting is echoed in the subsequent 'Dicta' section. However, in 'Dicta' the space for notes remains blank – the footnotes are and at the same time are not there, they appear as blank spaces, echoing the process of naming in 'Os' while, I suggest, foregrounding its impossibility [Figure 32 and Figure 33]. No footnotes feature in 'Sal', 'Ventus', and 'Ratio', while 'Ferrum', the final fully legible section of *Zong!*, closes with one final footnote, listing additional twenty-two names. This concluding footnote differs from those included in 'Os' in terms of typography. While the initial 228 names are typed, printed in the same font as the main body of

the poem, the footnote in 'Ferrum' appears as if handwritten. The approach, I suggest, again mirrors the interplay of two discourses that constantly interact in *Zong!*; 'Os' remains heavily reliant on the language of the case report, on the voice of the legal persons, and so adopts all of its aspects, including the typography. The footnote in 'Ferrum', on the other hand, is a manifestation of another voice or voices that gain prominence in sections following 'Dicta'. As Philip explains the approach:

> The handwritten texts are snippets of someone who is writing a letter or letters. Sometimes I think it's the character who jumps overboard at the end — […] who is himself undergoing a breakdown as he realizes that he has crossed some inner boundary that has compromised his soul irrevocably. The apparent vagueness in the statement – "Sometimes I think…" comes from my not knowing the entire story – the story that can't be told, yet must be told.[379]

The Africans are named, but their potential, speculative names, only appear as a footnote, marginalised in life, marginalised in *Gregson,* and only present in the margins of pages of *Zong!*, in the space outside the legal discourse that constitutes the text of the twenty-six poems together forming 'Os'.

'No one bears witness for the witness,'[380] Philip seems to repeat continuously after Paul Célan.[381] Where there are no witnesses the selection of African names can only be random. They are, Erin M. Fehskens suggests, both particular and general at the same time,[382] turning into a commentary on the impossibility of telling that Philip so eagerly stresses. It is an attempt at giving the voice to the silenced that immediately falls back on itself; Masuz, Zuwena, Ogunsheye, and 247 others, even when named, cannot be named and as such turn into traces of the lost individuals rather than a representation and a record of actual persons. The appropriation of the available, archival text evokes here a sense of a speculative iteration of history. To be written into a legal document is, in line with the constraints of the archive, to exist. An omission or erasure of a subject from the repository of the archive equals an erasure from history and memory. Seen as such, writing a document under erasure can only be understood as a process of re-writing the archive. Written into the pages of the *Gregson* v. *Gilbert* case report the slaves on board the *Zong* are given an extra-archival existence, where language is created out of and outside the official language,

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[379] Philip, email.
[380] M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*, (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 100. Hereafter Z!.
[381] The reference to Célan is important here. This quotation is included in the epigraph to 'Ratio', contextualising *Zong!,* and pointing to a very specific way of reading the text as a mediation on the possibilities of witnessing and testimony. My discussion of *Zong!* as a poetic testimony, and of its authorship as an expression of an act of witnessing, builds on the Célan reference.
[382] Erin M. Fehskens, 'Accounts Unpaid, Accounts Untold: M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* and the Catalogue', *Callaloo*, 35.2, (2012).

where, to borrow from Agamben, 'the fragile text of consciousness incessantly crumbles and erases itself, bringing to light the disjunction on which it is erected: the constitutive desubjectification in every subjectivication [...] an infinite deferral,'[383] a space of erasure.

This supplementation, inclusion but at the same time marginalisation of the Africans on the page, in the story, and in the official history, echoes in an interesting way the dynamics of legal case analysis. As Philip explains, such an exercise involves careful examination of available material to uncover the kernel of a legal principle that guides the decision, the so-called *ratio decidendi*, also referred to as *ratio*. The arrival at *ratio*, however, means that all other opinions become *obiter dicta*, or simply *dicta*, which is what, as Philip contends, the Africans on board the *Zong* become: 'dicta, footnotes, related to, but not, the ratio.'[384] As such, the 'Dicta' section of *Zong!* can be interpreted as a literary rendering of the legal process. 'Dicta' occupies an ambiguous space in the volume. It is not listed in the table of contents and serves, I suggest, as a transitional stage in the narrative development of *Zong!*. It marks a shift away from meaning and towards anti-meaning, from the official discourse to its deconstruction and obliteration. In 'Notanda' Philip describes the initial twenty-six poems in 'Os' as bones, while those in 'Sal', 'Ventus', 'Ratio', and 'Ferrum' manifest the flesh. 'Dicta' becomes, then, a transition from bones to the flesh, from legal to lyric personhood, from the clarity of the bare fact to the affect of reconstructed memories. As such, 'Dicta' is the section of the poem that is and at the same time is not there, characterised by blank footnotes and empty spaces, denoted only by '#' where individual poems' numbers appear in 'Os' [Figure 33]. Philip's 'Dicta', then, stands for that which is omitted. It is an exploration in the possibility of recovering the content previously dismissed as *obiter dicta* in the *Zong* case.

Philip's interest in this interplay of the content that is and is not included foregrounds the inherent objectivity of legal discourse as juxtaposed with poetic subjectivity. To quote Philip: 'a concern with precision and accuracy in language is common to both law and poetry, the law uses language as a tool for ordering [...] poetry to disassemble the order, to create disorder and mayhem so as to release the story that cannot be told.'[385] Poem #14 in 'Os' seems to echo this dynamic. Placed ambiguously between legal and lyric discourses, #14 follows a patter frequently recurring in *Zong!*. Here, the text is presented as a list to draw attention to the contrasting rhetoric of past and present [Figure 34]:

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[383] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 123. Hereafter RA.
[384] N, 199.
[385] Ibid.

Zong! #14

the truth was

the ship sailed

the rains came

the loss arose

the truth is

the ship sailed

the rains came

the loss arose

the negroes is

the truth was

FIGURE 34: M. NOURBESE PHILIP, *ZONG!*, POEM #14

While the *Gregson* case report only engages with that which 'was', *Zong!*, through its interest in the extra-legal forms of personhood, exercises a potential to speak of that which 'is'. Both the case report and the poem reference that which was to determine the nature of what is, or, to paraphrase Greaney, to reopen cases that seemed closed.[386] But the approaches that the two distinct discourses represent, employing two different epistemologies, yield markedly distinct outcomes. The constraints and constructedness of legal discourse and the legal categories of personhood contribute to a text that relies on the materiality of the evidence, embedded in the presence and inescapability of what was. *Zong!*, and the mode of writing a document under erasure more broadly, affords explorations in the present conceptualised as a negotiation of the trace.

[386] Greaney, 7.

Reversing the legal interpretative practice, erasure offers a means of an interpretation guided by the intersection of fact and fiction where fiction and emotion carry as much validity as facts. The account of *Gregson* – literally, as Philip points out, an account in terms of goods bought and sold – in the process of its iteration turns into what could be described as an affective account, shifting the focus from the objectivity of the fact and anonymity of the collective, to the subjectivity of the individual emotion. 'The Manifest', a closing section of *Zong!*, echoes this trajectory. The section comprises a list of items divided into seven categories: African groups and languages, animals, body parts, crew, food and drink, nature and women who wait. Each category comprises an eclectic mix of terms; among women who wait are some bearing typically English names, such as Rose, Grace and Mary, alongside West African Ans and Um; body parts are listed in English as well as Spanish, French, Portuguese and Dutch; animals and nature recall equally the characteristic European landscapes as well as their African counterparts. Traditionally, in a maritime context, a manifest means a list of cargo or passengers carried on a ship. It serves as a method of recording the inventory for customs procedures. As such, the role of a manifest is to log the material property on board of a ship. In her 'Manifest', Philip retains the form but subverts the nature of its content to echo her interest in the affective dimension of the *Zong* case. Her alternative 'Manifest' becomes an exploration in absences, listing the immaterial, the latent dreams and memories of those on board of the ship. It is a manifest of memory of both the crew and the slaves alike, who, represented as lyric rather than legal persons, find themselves all displaced but all equal; sharing the same desires and longings, regardless of their legal status. As such, 'The Manifest' is an iterative mediation on the remnants that form, to borrow from Aleida Assman, 'the converse image of the archive.'[387] Here iterative writing emerges as an alternative means of entering the archive.

Assman's typology of modes of remembering (and forgetting) proves useful in defining writing *sous rature*. Assman derives her taxonomy of memory forms from the categories devised by F.G. Jürgen. Drawing from the German linguistic differentiation between two terms used to describe the equivalent of English 'memory', Jürgen points to a distinction between *Gedächtnis* and *Erinnerung*. *Gedächtnis* is linked to knowledge and can be distinguished from *Errinerung,* the latter associated with personal experiences. Building on this duality, Assman differentiates between modes of active 'functional memory,' that of *Erinnerung*, and what she calls a 'storage memory', which can be classed as an expression of *Gedächtnis*. Assman's model, I suggest, is mirrored in the relationship between *The*

[387] Assman, 13.

Repo and the 9/11 Report, between *Zong!* and the *Zong* case. In both instances, the archival source texts can be considered manifestations of the storage memory; the oral histories of those marginalised in the process of compilation of the official narratives and excluded as a result are an expression of functional memory. The two erasures evoke that which oscillates somewhere in between the two as a latent memory, perhaps, the waste that accumulates outside the archive, excluded but always included in it at the same time. The erased archive is an assemblage of 'remnants [...] that have not been collected [...] yet form a collection that can be defined as the converse image of the archive.'[388] Texts and traces, official and unofficial histories remain always complementary but the constraints of the prescribed cultural frames mean that 'the remnants are opaque [...] the remnants constitute evidence for another kind of history.'[389] Building on this trajectory, then, the archive operates as a material space of history, whereas erasure turns into its other and a manifestation of a conceptual space of memory, where remembering occurs in gaps, cracks, leaks and holes. But this attempt at telling the story that cannot be told does not, importantly, constitute here an exercise in reparative history. Rather than an attempt, as Dowling observes, 'to discover and prioritise the disappeared voices [...] Philip creates a contrast between different types of vocal utterance in order to break the association of voice with personhood,'[390] as a result questioning the nature and authority of the official discourse, law, history and the language of the archive. The affective exploration of the past or, to borrow Assman's term, an interest in 'affect-memories' that acts of iteration make possible, bring to the fore the possibility of engaging with functional rather than storage memory.

2.6. AUTHORING TESTIMONY

There is no word for 'bringing bodies back from water.' Nothing, as Philip explains, 'has as precise a meaning as the unearthing contained within the word exhume.'[391] The drowned can never be saved, their narratives cannot be recorded, neither by the legal report nor in the subsequent histories, they remain witnesses of the events on board of the *Zong* devoid of any possibility to bear witness. The juxtaposition of the drowned and the saved as those who can and cannot bear witness in *Zong!,* and characteristically, the discourse employed by Philip in 'Notanda' to discuss the nature of both groups, echoes Primo Levi's essays on Auschwitz in *The*

[388] Ibid.
[389] Ibid, 131.
[390] Dowling, 52.
[391] N, 201.

Drowned and the Saved and Agamben's reading of Levi's work in *Remnants of Auschwitz*. The latter, I suggest, provides a particularly striking framework for reading *Zong!* and erasures engaging with the historical, legal and archival material more broadly. Philip's slaves can be seen as an echo of Levi's drowned; the true complete witnesses who emerge as Philip's 'ghostly footnotes'[392] in an untold story.

As Agamben, via Levi, stresses, the survivors are never true witnesses; 'the survivors speak in the stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony.'[393] As such, the only true witnesses to the events on board the *Zong* are those silenced by the linguistic situation, by the law and, subsequently, by death itself. For Agamben, this lack that defines the nature of *Zong's!* textuality is central to testimony: 'the drowned have nothing to say [...] they have [...] no "story", no "face", and even less do they have thought,'[394] they turn into the protagonists and bearers of those stories that cannot be told but must be told. Erasure speaks particularly explicitly to such a trajectory. Erasure, like testimony as defined by Agamben, always 'contains a lacuna';[395] determined by its lack it makes it necessary to look for meaning where meaning is lacking and to inscribe signification into the blank spaces on the page. As an impossible testimony, erasure's traces refer to neither language nor the codified signs but they prove, to borrow from Assman, inescapably semiotically readable, 'as indexical signs without any underlying code.'[396] In the context, the media of memory change form, from '"speaking" to "silent" witness that could be made to speak again.'[397] The recognition of the signifying nature of the textual gaps, just like the acknowledgement of the lack as the essence of testimony, alters the value of the act of erasure in that it alters 'the value of testimony.'[398] In Agamben's words, 'it makes it necessary to look for its meaning in an unexpected area.'[399] Applied as such, erasure responds to the need of finding a voice and, by relying on writing through someone else's text, becomes a tool for filling in a void created by that inability to speak of history, politics and memories of both. Such an inability to speak triggers a need for an alternative way of speaking; to borrow from Blanchot, 'it is upon losing what we have to say that we speak – upon an imminent and immemorial disaster [...] we speak suggesting that something not being said is speaking.'[400]

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[392] Ibid, 200.
[393] RA, 34.
[394] Ibid.
[395] Ibid, 33.
[396] Assman, 201.
[397] Ibid.
[398] RA, 35.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Blanchot, 21.

An interesting trajectory arises as a result of this juxtaposition of poetry, history, and law. Both Macdonald's and Philip's erasures appropriate texts that, to a different extent, engage with legal issues. Apart from their treatment of the historical and political themes, questions of copyright are also significant here. Engaging with the *Gregson* v. *Gilbert* case or the 9/11 Report by means of iteration does not pose copyright issues and does not raise questions of authorship in the same way as appropriating a copyrighted edition of Emily Dickinson's poems might. Both sources are exempt from traditionally assigned copyright limitations, as discussed in the context of *The O Mission Repo*. But these texts are also public in an extra-legal way, in that they preserve the shared, official memory of historically significant events. A certain sense of entitlement and permissiveness to access and use these sources transpires in Macdonald's and Philip's approach. It is, perhaps, an assumption that 'the taxpayer dollar' offers universal propriety privileges. Categories of traditional authorship do not apply here, not simply because of potential attribution challenges, but because of the nature of historical memory, of shared ownership of history and the past preserved as a sphere of freely accessible cultural commons. In the end, every act of appropriation presupposes, as Jan Verwoert observes, a related act of expropriation. But, 'how do you talk about latent history in proprietary terms,'[401] how can you claim ownership of particular historical moment or of a particular historical feeling? Erasing a document can be seen as an attempt at (re)writing history and making a potentially controversial claim of authorship to a material residing somewhere outside the sphere of traditionally recognised proprietary categories of artistic production. In the context, the archive becomes a charged, contested space, always already owned. When considered as such, the erasure of the 9/11 Report becomes an act of appropriation of the poignant cultural moment and not just a textual exercise in iteration. Hence, both *Zong!* and *The Repo* bring to the fore questions of the possibility, or its lack, of writing, re-writing and authoring history – of history at the Iterative turn – the ethics involved in the process as well as the potential for questioning the archive and the authorship ascribed to acts of remembering, especially with respect to the collective memory of publically significant events.

Philip seems to address these issues by engaging in an act of collaborative authorship. Evocative of Macdonald's approach, *Zong!* features the figure of a fictional author. But while in *O Mission* the unnamed author also acts as one of the

[401] Jan Verwoert, Tate Triennial Symposium 2006, Part 2, 5 May 2006, accessed 20 December 2013, http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tate-triennial-2006-symposium-part-2 .

text's protagonists, *Zong!* transforms the polyphonic nature of the text into the text's origin. *Zong!* is a co-authored text, a product of Philip's collaboration with her fictional author; as the cover of *Zong!* reads, this is a story 'as told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng.' The spine of the volume mentions both Philip and Boateng as authors. *Zong!*, then, is dialogic; it focuses on iterative histories rather than a single history, celebrating and acknowledging the polyvocal essence of the narratives embedded in the remaining records of events on board the *Zong*. This complex thinking about the structure of authorship in writing a document under erasure openly positions *Zong!* in stark contrast to the implicitly monologic nature of the legal discourse of the case report and its unambiguous authorship. This shift in conceptualisation of the origins of writing that seems to define the authorial model for erasure poetics requires a certain re-assignation of literary categories. As an exploration in the possibilities of speculative archival practice, *Zong!* and *The Repo* deal with a collective memory, one that 'always exists in plural,'[402] as opposed to a historical memory preserved in the 9/11 Report and the *Zong* case report, the latter two designed to provide a universal framework for remembering an event, always characteristically singular. Implicit in this categorisation is an attempt at relinquishment and at the same time acknowledgement of authorship, an approach that echoes, yet again, the nature of the third mind of collaboration and the open source, creative commons thinking characteristic of writing at the Iterative turn.

Boateng, I suggest, offers a possible alternative model of authorship for contemporary erasure. Boateng assumes a key role in narrating the testimony in a context where no one can bear witness. Boateng becomes an impossible attempt at establishing a figure of a complete witness. As such, *Zong!* can be read as an echo of an oral narrative, only written down by Philip, but 'told' by Boateng – a teller of those oral tales – a voice from outside the archive; a bearer of the stories to which the slaves or Philip herself, cannot bear witness and, as such, have no way of authoring. However, in line with Agamben's categories, Boateng's status is ambiguous. For Agamben, it is 'impossible to bear witness [...] from the inside – since no one can bear witness from the inside of death, and there is no voice for the disappearance of voice – and from the "outside" – since the outsider is by definition excluded from the event.'[403] For Agamben, then, the survivor is the one 'who can speak but has nothing interesting to say'[404] while the witness 'has seen the Gorgon,'[405] representing one who

[402] Assman, 121.
[403] RA, 35.
[404] Ibid, 120.
[405] Ibid.

has '"touched bottom," and therefore has much to say but cannot speak.'[406] As such, what happened on board the *Zong* can only operate as an event without witness, in a way, an event *sous rature*, and so Boateng remains neither a witness nor a survivor, but rather a mediator between the two; a new stratum to the paradigms of witnessing not recognised by Agamben.

Although the resulting text is presented as a manifestation of the third mind poetics, incorporating oral storytelling and contemporary poetry, its publication is informed by the principles of Western categories of authorship and copyright. It is Philip and Philip alone who remains recognised as the author and a copyright holder. Philip commits those stories to the page; to the copyrightable, material format, in line with official, legal categories of authorship, turning Boateng's oral narratives into a tangible form of expression and fulfilling the standard copyright fixation requirements. Regardless of the restrictions of the publishing apparatus, by acknowledging the contribution of both Philip and Boateng, *Zong!* oscillates between the fixity and fluidity of discourse, in a space between collective and historical, storage and functional memories, opening an iterative space for their constant interplay. In this framework the dynamic of witnessing changes. The subjective nature of testimony is brought to the fore and a direct association between acts of authorship and acts of witnessing is established, echoing Agamben's taxonomies of testimony. For Agamben, an act of witnessing always presupposes an act of authorship:

> we may say that to bear witness is to pace oneself in one's own language in the position of those who have lost it, to establish oneself in a living language as if it were dead, or in a dead language as if it were living – in any case, outside both the archive and the *corpus* of what has already been said. It is not surprising that the witness' gesture is also that of the poet, the *auctor* par excellence. [...] poetic word is the one that is always situated in the position of a remnant and that can, therefore, bear witness. Poets – witnesses – found language as what remains, as what actually, survives the possibility, or impossibility of speaking. [...] what cannot be stated, what cannot be archived is the language in which the author succeeds in bearing witness to his incapacity to speak.[407]

The nature of collaborative means of textual production foregrounded in erasure also manifests itself clearly in the possibilities of constructing a testimony. If, as Agamben states, 'testimony takes place where the speechless one makes the speaking one speak and the one who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking'[408] then testimony becomes a category of production of meaning that is unattributable, generated from

[406] Ibid.
[407] Ibid, 161.
[408] Ibid, 120

within a 'zone of indistinction,'[409] where it is impossible to establish the position of the subject, and, as a result the witness and the author. As such, in testimony, the authorship is always, at least double; 'every author,' for Agamben (via Barthes, Foucault et al.), 'is a co-author.'[410] Such an approach is dictated by the survivors who always speak in place of the complete witness. It is a framework for the production of meaning based on the assumption that no speaking position has a potential to be exclusively owned. As such, the death of the witness is congruent, I suggest, with the Barthesian notion of the death of the author.

Interestingly, Agamben notes a differentiation made in Latin between two words used for witness:

> *testis,* from which our word 'testimony' derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in a position of a third party [...]. The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from the beginning to an end and can therefore bear witness to it.[411]

In this sense both Philip and Macdonald become witnesses of sorts, as does Philip's imaginary author. But this is where the distinction between two categories of witnessing established by Agamben proves particularly applicable. Where Boateng and Macdonald's unnamed authors both feature as a *superstitēs*, Philip and Macdonald as authors can only perform as *testēs*, recounting the events without witness. Framed by this lack, testimony – and like testimony, erasure – always presupposes a lacuna. Acts of saying and not saying coalesce in a particularly striking way in both testimony and erasure. Writing a document by iterative means always creates new lacunae to address those created by and within the document itself.

Agamben characteristically links the etymology of the words 'author' and 'witness' as well as 'proprietor':

> the modern meaning of the term 'author' appears relatively late [...] the oldest meaning of the term also include 'vendor' in the act of transferring property, 'he who advises or persuades' and, finally, 'witness'. In what way can a term that expresses the idea of the completion of an imperfect act also signify seller, adviser, and witness? [...] If *testis* designates the witness insofar as he intervenes as a third in a suit between two subjects, and if *superstes* indicates the one who has fully lived through an experience and can therefore relate it to others, *auctor* signifies the witness insofar as his testimony presupposes something – a fact, a thing or a word – that preexists him and his reality and force must be validated or certified.[412]

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[409] Ibid.
[410] Ibid, 150.
[411] Ibid, 17.
[412] Ibid, 148-50.

The authorial framework of *Zong!* seems to reverberate with echoes of this classification. There are clear correlations between acts of witnessing, the ability and inability to testify to the events on board the *Zong*, and, hence, to retell and author the related stories. This framework inevitably presupposes an inadequacy of testimony to writing history, the archive, or of any possibility of their iteration. At the same time, such thinking about constraints of writing points to the significance of erasure as a model of writing against the official narratives.

But the role of a witness – and if we associate witnessing with authorship, the author – as a proprietor also reverberates in *Zong!* in a twofold manner. In line with the late eighteenth-century legislation, the ones who are given the voice, and hence the authority to speak and record history, are only those who can claim property rights over the ship and over the slaves. As such, any possible source of testimony turns an act of witnessing into a proprietary act. But a process of 'transferring property,' as described by Agamben, also manifests itself otherwise in *Zong!*. In the transition from Boataeg's orality to materiality of print executed by Philip an act of transferring ownership over the text also occurs. A transfer of textual property and subsequent acquisition of authorial rights marks the interplay between Boateng, the teller of tales, and Philip, the acknowledged author. What transpires as a result is a shift between respective modes of authorship. Those stories, even if written from the margins of the archive, still need to be inscribed into an official framework in order to be heard, fixed in the legitimising medium of print, never set to circulate freely, instead always subject to a form of an external authority, be it legal or literary. This duality echoes the structure of testimony as an act of authorship; as Agamben describes it, 'the difference and the completion of an impossibility and possibility of speaking, of the inhuman and the human, a living being and a speaking being,'[413] of a fractured but irreducible subject of testimony.

If testimony is, as Agamben asserts, always the act of an author, always an exploration in this duality of 'impotentiality and potentiality of speaking,'[414] then authoring a document under erasure could be seen, by analogy, as a literalisation of this practice and hence in itself an act of authoring a testimony. Such an act of authorship is always an inherently iterative act. It presupposes an engagement with language of testimony characteristically 'disrupted by the event, a language of repetition'[415] and mediated through a subject construed as a lyric rather than a legal

[413] RA, 151.
[414] Ibid.
[415] Michael Bernard-Donals, 'Beyond the Question of Authenticity: Witness and Testimony in the *Fragments* Controversy', in *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the*

person. The model of authorship formulated as such relies on the third party as the only possible narrator. If there is no-one to bear witness and as a result to narrate those stories as they happened, then a document under erasure can only be written by a witness, and a narrator, a step removed from the original story. Conceptualised as such, a narrator always creates by iterative means, while change and removal of origins are always implied in the creative process. There only remains a possibility for the third party to recount the story of the *Zong*, of testimony as reported by *testis* as a voice of the third mind of collaboration.

But this focus on the third party also points to a level of impartiality that characterises the writing process; in legal terms, it carries an expectation of neutrality. But, paradoxically, the impartiality and objectivity required by the official discourse and testimony is always an impossibility – an assertion that erasure echoes particularly explicitly. The authority of testimony should depend on the factual truth. But testimony is an ambiguous form defined by 'the immemorial relation between the unsayable and the sayable, between the outside and the inside of language.'[416] As such, testimony, and a document *sous rature*, instead of guaranteeing the factual truth, communicates the impossibility of its iteration, or, as Agamben puts it,

> its unarchivability, its exteriority with respect to the archive – that is, the necessity by which, as the existence of language, it escapes both memory and forgetting. It is because there is testimony only where there is an impossibility of speaking, because there is a witness only where there has been desubjectification.[417]

Philip's and Macdonald's iterative poetic acts transform the stories of the *Zong* and 9/11 from archival sources into expressions of alternative testimonies. Recovering meaning from the archive, both texts become explorations in the possibility of iteration. They represent instances of writing in a constant state of becoming a testimony, as textual beings taking place 'only through [their] possibility of not being there.'[418] As such, erasure emerges as a tool for exploring the possibility of delving into the unarchivable. *Zong!* and *The O Mission Repo* serve as expressions of the non-judicial truths, texts interested in pushing the official records of the *Gregson* v. *Gilbert* case and the 9/11 Commission Report beyond the confines of *res judica* – the legal truth – to open it up to new, subjective, affective meanings.

Holocaust, eds. Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 204.
[416] RA, 158.
[417] Ibid.
[418] Ibid, 146.

2.7. A DOCUMENTARY TURN

While subverting it, erasure that engages with documentary sources always remains embedded in the archive; as a lyrical form of testimony it questions its authority but at the same time iterates the process of archiving. Erasure's archive, then, implies a departure from the traditionally understood modes of archiving and moves towards, I suggest, an engagement with the archive in Foucauldian terms – 'the general system of formation and transformation of statements'[419] – an archive that operates as a set of rules 'that define the event of discourse,'[420] as opposed to a material repository of documents.[421] An archive understood as a manifestation of Foucault's thinking is, unlike an archive in traditional, material terms, inherently and infinitely iterable and iterative. I consider an interest in history and memory formulated as such – a preoccupation conspicuous in erasure writing – as an echo of similar developments in contemporary art. I refer here to an increased prominence of the documentary and the document as a subject of artistic expression and epitomised especially in Documenta 11 and 12 (with a formative influence of Okwui Enwezor's curatorial and critical work) and prominent since.[422] What characterises the current developments in the visual arts is the commitment to the documentary material, oscillating somewhere between a documentary and a commentary, critique and analysis, with 'archival legacies [...] transformed into aesthetic principles.'[423] But, as Ezewor asserts, today 'this relationship between past event and its document, an

[419] AK, 130.
[420] RA, 143.
[421] A correlation can be drawn between iterative thinking behind writing a document under erasure and Foucault's writing practices. As Greaney observes, in 1970s and 1980s working with appropriated texts, quoting and compiling documentary material, was a key historicising method for Foucault. Texts representative of this approach include: *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother: A case of Parricide in the 19th Century* (1982), a compilation of documents related to Rivière's court case, and *Herculine Barbin, Being Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite* (1980), an appropriated memoir [Greaney, ix]. Foucault's 'The Life of Infamous Men', can, in fact, be considered an outline of the principles of documentary appropriation writing. As Foucault describes it, 'The Life' is 'an anthology of existences [...], brief lives, chanced upon in books and documents [...], singular lives, those which have become [...] strange poems' [Michel Foucault, 'The Life of Infamous Men', in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979), 76].'The Life' is an introduction to a volume under the same title, a project Foucault never completed but intended as 'a great compilation of infamy' (82), a selection of 'strange poems' derived from a range of documents all dating from 1660-1760 and sourced from 'the archives of confinement, police, petitions to the king and *lettres de cachet*' (82).
[422] Artists associated with the documentary turn include Tacita Dean, Christian Boltanski, Harun Farocki, Hans-Peter Feldman, among others.
[423] Okuwi Enwezor, 'Archive Fever: Photography Between History and the Monument', in *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York: International Centre of Photography and Gottingen: Steidl, 2008), 22.

action and its archival photographic trace, is not simply an act of citing a pre-existing object or event; the photographic document is a replacement of the object or event not merely a record of it.'[424] In visual arts, this resurgence of interest in appropriation focusing on the archive has been described as a paradigm shift in the early twenty-first century. I see the emergence of writing document under erasure as a literary response to and a manifestation of those exact developments, as their iteration, by textual means. In documents written under erasure, methods and forms characteristic of the Iterative turn converge with the aesthetic preoccupations of the documentary turn in visual arts.

Jill Bennett links this rise in the interest in the document as a subject in contemporary visual arts to the events of 9/11. I would like to suggest that reasons for the developments Bennett is describing reside in a broader frame of contemporary culture and stem from the current postproduction condition. What contemporary digitalisation contributes to the way we experience reality and, hence, culturally, politically and historically significant events, is a marked transition from the private to the public. The media and technology now allow for, at an unprecedented level, an experience of history as it happens. The war and natural disasters today – on a par with reality TV – are public in that everyone has access to them, with facilities for interacting and potentially interfering with the event. 'Current conflicts,' as T.J. Demos observes,

> are […] thus fought on (at least) two fronts – both on the ground, with military might […] and in cyberspace, via media power […] jihadi strikes in postwar Iraq, for instance, accompany simultaneous news dispatches (whether emanating officially from as-Sahab, al-Qaeda's media wing, or anonymously dispersed on Internet file-sharing sites.[425]

We experience events that are not ours to experience, in real time, and these feed into our construction of history, memory, but also the self in novel ways. This is an information dynamic paramount to and paradigmatic of the current cultural moment that both enables and encourages iterative thinking. More than just a mode of representation, the emergence of the contemporary information culture has contributed to a rise of novel modes of seeing, witnessing, and inhabiting an event that, in turn, influence the formation of contemporary self-identities. Holmes's expression of the trauma of the Iraq war in *The MS of MY Kin* is a distant, media induced experience, not less significant than the response of those who encounter the war more directly but a different, hybrid form of remembering the events.

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[424] Ibid, 23.
[425] T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 170.

History now, mediated through the new technologies is, as Verwoert observes, always there as a latency; 'we moved from dead history to undead history'[426] through our capacity to engage and interact with it as it develops. Seen as such, it is not Baudrillard's simulacral reality that shaped the developments of postmodern aesthetics and appropriation but an iterative prosthetic culture that we are experiencing now. The notion of prosthesis is key, I suggest, to understanding the contemporary attitudes towards iteration embedded in the archive; a culture mediated through hybrid, prosthetic memories. Prosthetic memories formulated in the contemporary postproduction context are, as Alison Landsberg describes the concept, 'memories which do not come from a person's lived experience in any strict sense. These are implanted memories,' memories triggered by 'unsettled boundaries between real and simulated ones.'[427] Seen as such, memories become permanently transferable and iterable. Where the memories are not associated with a first-hand experience, any possibility of assignation of memory to an individual – of memories as inalienable property –becomes problematic. A similar sense of subverted origins manifests itself in thinking about paradigms of memory and in the efforts at arriving at contemporary models of authorship, both addressing challenges to thinking about the possibilities of originality at the Iterative turn.

How to deal with such an exposure to and assimilation of information and potential resulting traumas is yet another challenging question; contemporary visual arts and, through experimental forms of writing such as erasure, also literature today, are exploring means of addressing and responding to the issue. But this interest in the real in the twenty-first century derives not so much from a preoccupation with figurative forms of expression and a drive towards verisimilitude. Instead, it is, as Bennett describes it, marked by 'a focus on how the event is apprehended: on perception and feeling as constitutive of the event itself.'[428] The real approached as such gives rise to 'emotive politics of events';[429] it brings to the fore the role of affect in engaging with the archive, as touched upon earlier in this chapter. Macdonald's and Philip's practices respond particularly explicitly to that affective turn,[430] and, at

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[426] Verwoert, Tate.
[427] Alison Landsberg, 'Prosthetic Memory: *Total Recall* and *Blade Runner'*, in *Cybespace,/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment,* ed. Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 175.
[428] Jill Bennett*, Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affects and Art after 9/11* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 20. Hereafter PA.
[429] Ibid, 24
[430] Critical explorations of affect have been proliferating since 2000. Theories of affect explore ways of understanding experience outside of the dominant paradigms of representation. Theoretical approaches to affect strive to organise emotions and subjective experiences as encounters, to associate them with typical responses. Theorists of affect include Lauren Berlant, Brian Massumi, and Sara Ahmed,

the same time, remain deeply rooted in the aesthetics of iteration, merging an interest in appropriation techniques with a preoccupation with poetics of feeling and modes of expressing subjectivity as a 'determining feature of social, cultural and political relations.'[431]

Parallel dynamics seem to influence approaches to history and memory today: 'through information technology and new research into the structure of the brain,' writes Assman, 'we are now experiencing a change of paradigm, by which the concept of a lasting written record is being replaced by the principle of continuous rewritings.'[432] Understood in the context, an act of writing erasure as a form governed by affect and iteration combined, turns into an act of writing memory. Erasure, and especially erasure that draws from the archive for sources, yields both affect and iteration visible. Acknowledging both as marked by expressive qualities, it enables new ways of being in the event rather than simply restoring experiences of history. For Verwoert acts of appropriation are intrinsically linked to a particular understanding of history, but as perceptions of history change, Verwoert argues, understanding of the notion of appropriation also changes. As a paradigm shift, new understanding of history is, today, grounded in the contemporary postproduction moment, in new media technologies and the possibilities they open up. The contemporary digital culture is key to understanding the paradigms of documentary visual culture today. As Enwezor points out:

> the issue grappled here is not so much the artist's employment of archival logic but rather, the artist's relationship to images and instruments of mass culture or media in which the archival is sought out – especially in the digital arena – as part of a broad culture of sampling, sharing and recombining of visual data in infinite calibrations of users and receivers.[433]

Erasure's experimentation resides in the possibility of approaching the archive and the history from the inside. But it remains equally concerned with the material of the official history and the para-historical, accessible much more freely in the contemporary digital age. Erasure relies on presence and absence of history and the archive at the same time. It is a genre interested in what is outside language to engage with extra-historical, counter-archival and as a result extra-textual meanings. It is the characteristic formal possibilities of appropriating the document that render erasure a form that is not simply a creative practice dealing with affect but, to borrow Bennett's term, one that enables 'affective process,'[434] facilitating means of instilling

[431] PA, 20.
[432] Assman, 11.
[433] Enwezor, 23.
[434] PA, 26.

the affective content into the frame of objective discourse of the archive, an approach made possible through an engagement with an iterative process. It offers tactics for turning history into personal memories. Read as such, erasure emerges as a particularly current form of writing and a manifestation of broader contemporary aesthetic preoccupations. Like contemporary documentary art erasure should be approached as 'an aesthetic reconfiguration of experience,' [435] 'reconnected,' as Bennett, via Deleuze and Guattari, puts it, 'over a lacuna rather than linked by continuation.'[436] It is a lacuna that finds its manifestation in the pages of documents *sous rature*.

[435] Ibid, 43.
[436] Ibid, 49.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION: WRITING TRANSCRIPTION

I would like to open this chapter by returning, albeit briefly, to Jenny Holzer's *Redaction Paintings*, as discussed with reference to erasure poetry. Holzer, I suggested in Chapter 2, is interested in the erasure of information, the manipulation of meaning, and censorship, raising questions about the issues by foregrounding the visual aspects of the declassified documents she incorporates into her art. Her prints are a striking echo of writing under erasure in visual arts. But what characterises Holzer's approach to her source texts is a practice of verbatim reproduction. Unlike erasure writers, and unlike Robert Rauschenberg erasing de Kooning's drawing, Holzer does not alter the source; her appropriation method relies solely on reproduction. Recalling the methods of earlier appropriations by Andy Warhol, *Redaction Paintings* are produced by silkscreening a range of declassified government documents. As Holzer explains, her choice of technique references Warhol's *Death and Disaster* works[437] (a reference of particular significance in the context of this chapter). Although relevant to my discussion of erasure practices and evocative of the typography of an erased page, the approach employed in *Redaction Paintings* also serves as a particularly fitting starting point for considering another experimental form of iterative poetics. Discussed here under the umbrella term of transcription writing, this take on iteration will be discussed with reference to representative works by Kenneth Goldsmith. Holzer's work, I suggest, establishes an evocative link between erasure and transcription as creative practices.

I consider transcription a hyperbolic form of the kind of iterative thinking that characterises erasure writing, one that pushes the method of poetics *sous rature* to the extreme. As a basic premise, an idea of a copy is assumed here as a creative paradigm. I focus on texts composed by means of transcribing other texts verbatim, evoking Holzer's paintings as copies of the appropriated material. Examples of poetry discussed in this chapter include four works by Kenneth Goldsmith: *Day* (2003) and *The Day* (2009), both transcriptions of *The New York Times*; *The Weather* (2005), a retyping of radio weather forecasts; and *Seven American Deaths and Disasters* (2013), an appropriated media coverage of seven key moments in American history. While in the case of erasure alteration of the source is inherent in the method of copying with a *différance*, the boundaries between the source and a copy become less apparent in transcription writing. Where transcription occurs, any possibility of differentiating between a copy and the original is put into question. In a manner

437 Jenny Holzer, 'An Interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh', in *Jenny Holzer*, ed. David Breslin (Ostfildern: Hatje Canz, 2009), 122.

reminiscent of Borgesian Pierre Menard writing his *Don Quixote,* an act of transcription produces a text that is an indiscriminate copy of its source.[438] My discussion of works created by means of transcription is an attempt at devising another possible framework for thinking about writing at the Iterative turn. I discuss transcription in relation to theories of the event to present it as a form that should be considered as an event of writing. Following on from the approach taken in Chapter 2, this critical reading is a means of exploring possibilities of thinking differently about paradigms of authorship and originality at the turn, and arriving at a critical framework that enables this conceptual shift.

3.1. KENNETH GOLDSMITH, *DAY*

Goldsmith's *Day* serves as a particularly explicit example of the possibilities of writing by iterative means. *Day* is a retyping of the entire issue of *The New York Times* from Friday, September 1, 2000. In Goldsmith's transcription no content is omitted: the text of the newspaper is transcribed word for word, page by page, from top to bottom and left to right, following the text, any text, on the page and 'incorporating,' as Judith Goldman describes the process, 'eruptions of ad copy into news stories and massive entries of stock quotes.'[439] Goldsmith explains:

> If an article, for example, continued on another page I wouldn't go there. Instead, I would finish retyping the page I was on in full before proceeding to the next one. I allowed myself no creative liberties with the text. [...] Everywhere there was a bit of text in the paper, I grabbed it. I made no distinction between editorial and advertising, stock quotes or classified ads. If it could be considered text, I had to have it. Even if there was, say, an ad for a car, I took a magnifying glass and grabbed the text of the license plate.[440]

Published as an 830-page volume, the text comprising *Day* transforms the characteristic typography of a non-linear newspaper page into the linear text of a book traditionally understood, turning reading into an act of writing, textual consumption into an act of literary production, and transcription into a process of re-typesetting.

Goldsmith's methods and technologies are worth mentioning in the context. Some text in *Day* is manually transcribed, some scanned using OCR technologies,

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[438] In 'Being Boring' Goldsmith declares affinities with Borges and his Pierre Menard method by stating: 'I've thought about my practice in relation to Borges's Pierre Menard, but even Menard was more original than I am: he, independent of any knowledge of *Don Quixote*, reinvented Cervantes' masterpiece word for word. By contrast, I don't invent anything. I just keep rewriting the same book' [BB].

[439] Judith Goldman, 'Re-thinking "Non-retinal Literature": Citation, "Radical Mimesis," and Phenomenologies of Reading in Conceptual Writing', *Postmodern Culture*, 22.1 (2011), non. pag.

[440] BB.

rendering the content of *Day* and *The New York Times* identical, while the context and form change (in line with the typically conceptual focus on context as the new content). Goldsmith's commitment to a technology-driven writing process is key here, indicative of postproduction sensibilities expressed in gestures similar to Place's, Morrison's or Doeringer's, as discussed in Chapter 1. To write *Day* is to collect, collate, and rearrange language of stories already readily available, every day. 'The daily newspaper,' as Goldsmith explains,

> is really a great novel filled with stories of love, jealousy, murder, competition, sex, passion and so forth. It's a fantastic thing: the daily newspaper, when translated, amounts to a 900 page book [...] And it's a book that's written in every city and in every country, only to be instantly discarded in order to write a brand new one, full of fresh stories the next day.[441]

Echoes of Bourriaud's philosophy reverberate clearly in Goldsmith's statements on the nature of his own work and contemporary creativity more broadly. Seeing the current cultural landscape as inherently uncreative, Goldsmith evokes Bourriaud's logic by claiming affinities with conceptual artist's Douglas Huebler: 'the world is full of objects, more or less interesting,' Huebler observed in 1969, 'I do not wish to add any more;'[442] 'The world is full of texts, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more,'[443] suggests Goldsmith in 2004. This approach, declaring a propensity for iteration through an iterative act, explicitly defines Goldsmith's attitude and the broader logic of writing at the Iterative turn. The gesture is also key in that it foregrounds the contemporaneity of Goldsmith's practice. It manifests a transition from postmodern to postproduction preoccupations and modes of appropriation, from Huebler's objects to Goldsmith's texts, from things to information.

A similar approach informs Goldsmith's take on pagination in *Day* – an appropriation of the format applied by *The Times*. Pages of the paper are numbered according to a characteristic alphanumeric model, where a letter corresponds to a section and a number to a page within that section. 'A' stands for *The New York Times* daily, 'B' for 'Metro', 'C' is 'Business Day', with 'D' focused on 'Sports Friday', 'E' referring to the 'Weekend' section, and 'F' devoted to automobiles, including classified advertising. This division is then reflected in *Day*, although chapters of Goldsmith's volume are titled according to the letters that correspond to each newspaper section rather than according to the section's subject matter. The entire volume of *Day* is split

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[441] Ibid.
[442] Douglas Huebler, Statement in exhibition catalogue, *January 5-31, 1969* the McLendon Building, New York, in Lucy Lippard (ed.), *Six Years: The dematerialisation of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 74.
[443] BB.

into chapters marked A-F, with pages referenced by a double system, each denoted by a page number as it reflects the pagination specific to *Day* itself and one that references the relevant page of the newspaper. As such, the transcription of page A1 of *The New York Times* starts on page 11 of *Day* and concludes on page 16. Pages of *Day* that correspond to page A1 in *The New York Times* are subsequently numbered: 11/A1, 12/A1, 13/A1, etc., to then turn into 17/A2 where the transcription of page A2 begins. The transcription of the complete front page of the newspaper translates into six pages of text. The preserved content merges into a continuous flow of discourse; no images are retained (though captions and text that is embedded in them are),[444] font types and sizes are all unified.

But, tellingly, this pagination method also echoes the format of Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin's volume, just like *Day*, is divided into sections, arranged according to a similar system using letters and page numbers. The layout of *Day's* pages mirrors the characteristic typography of the Belknap Press/Harvard 2002 English edition of *The Arcades*.[445] In both *Day* and *The Arcades Project* page numbers and letters indicating a section are printed side by side, divided by a forward slash, and positioned vertically on the outer margin. Goldsmith's text is split into short paragraphs and printed in the same font as *The Arcades*, evoking Benjamin's fragmented, collected text [Figure 35]. This formatting, I suggest, is fundamental to understanding Goldsmith's iterative practice. *Day* emerges as a text characterised by a multiplicity of iterations. Here, both content and form are a result of acts of repetition; the iteration is both actual – manifested on the level of appropriated content and its format – and conceptual – evoking similar historical gestures that influence contemporary iterative thinking. Presenting *Day* as a contemporary take on *The Arcades Project* is driven by the same attitude that informs Goldsmith's appropriation of Huebler's declaration, commenting on and performing acts of iteration at the same time. In both instances, the approach is a means of inscribing the work into a very specific cultural framework, unambiguously establishing conceptual writing as representative of a tradition of iterative, conceptual practice and thought. Presenting *Day* as Goldsmith's *Arcades* can be seen as a comment on

444 This approach is important from the copyright point of view. Goldsmith treats his source as a repository of information and not as a collection of individually authored texts. By doing so Goldsmith plays against the copyright rules by complying with the rules at the same time, in a gesture evocative of Prince's *Catcher*. Information cannot be copyrighted and is considered available for citing and reuse as publically available material. Images, however, are copyright to individual photographers or agencies. Anything that is unambiguously problematic from the copyright's point of view is omitted in *Day*.

445 This choice of formatting is briefly referenced by Goldsmith in *Uncreative Writing* but not discussed in detail. The only mention of the source reads: 'I ended up making it the exact size and bulk of the paperbound Harvard edition of *The Arcades Project*' [UW, 119].

his approach to authorship that writing by means of iteration invites. Benjamin's project is one of Goldsmith's key texts: 'in [*The*] *Arcades Project,'* Goldsmith writes, 'we have a literary roadmap for appropriation.'[446] As such, it proves essential to understanding the logic of his uncreative writing as an expression of authorship rather than as a purely automated gesture. For Goldsmith, 'Benjamin's own voice inserts itself,'[447] and *The Arcades* is an expression of 'the author's synthetic skill [...] the exquisite quality of Benjamin's choices, his taste.'[448] This is the kind of thinking, Goldsmith seems to suggest, that should be conveyed in any attempt at engaging with *Day*. It is what and how both Benjamin and Goldsmith select to copy, organise, and curate, that is vital to understanding the creative dynamic of iteration.[449]

The difficulty of reading Goldsmith's *Day*, then, evokes the challenge of engaging with *The Arcades*. Goldsmith's excessive amalgamation of content produces a seemingly unreadable text. The issue of unreadability of works such as *Day* is indicative of characteristic attitudes towards reading as well as creative and critical writing practices at the Iterative turn. Goldsmith sees his work as unreadable in that it is written to provoke what he describes as thinkership rather than readership as a contemporary model of engaging with creative works. For Goldsmith (repeating after LeWitt, paraphrasing Yoko Ono), 'art should exist only in the mind.'[450] And there is a widespread credulous tendency among critics and scholars to rather uncritically follow Goldsmith's declarations. No one, just as Goldsmith would have it, seems to have read *Day*. In an article discussing Goldsmith's work, Bill Friend, for example, unabashedly states: 'I haven't read Goldsmith's *Day* [...]. Although I consider myself a big fan of his work, I've read almost none of it.'[451] This approach to Goldsmith criticism results in proliferating misreadings and misinterpretations, with *Day* particularly illustrative of the tendency. Although a retyping of *The New York Times* issue from September 1, 2000, associating the volume with September 1, 2001 is a common mistake. J. Mark Smith's Introduction to *Time in Time* (2013) and Steve

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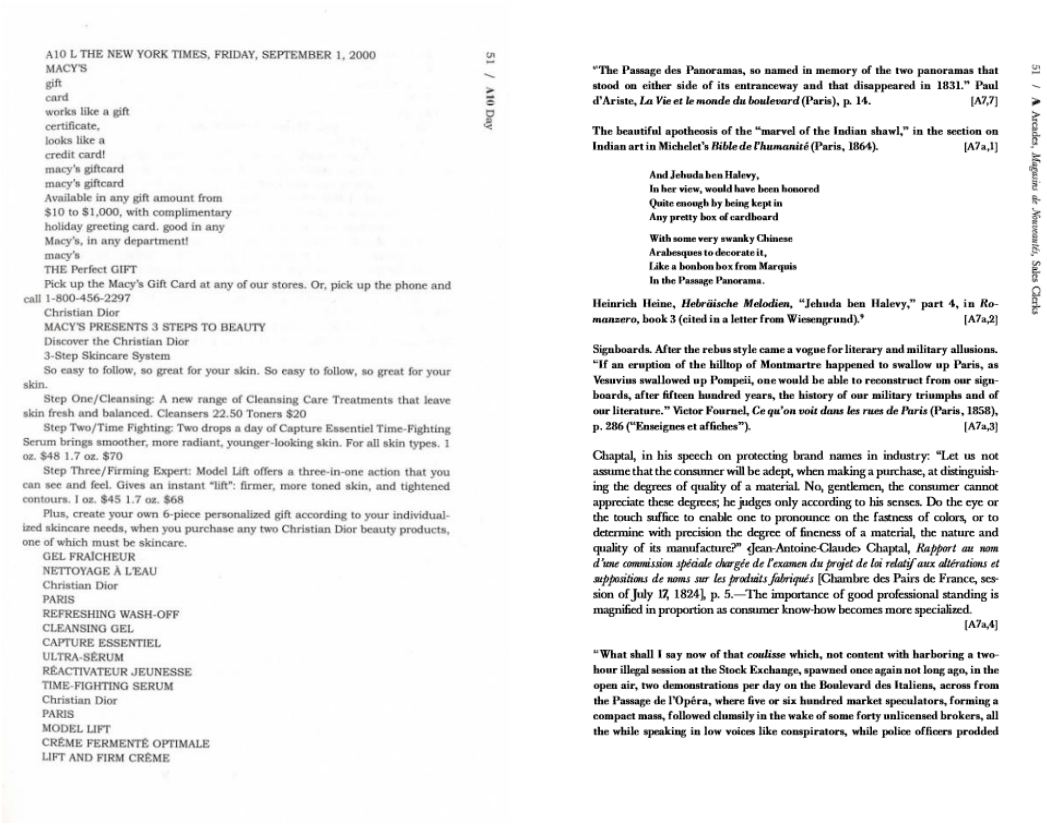
[446] UW, 117.
[447] Ibid, 109
[448] Ibid, 113.
[449] Issues of authorship as a curatorial practice are explored later in this chapter.
[450] UW, 132. This is an assertion evocative of the principles of conceptual art. The work of conceptual art characteristically dispenses with retinal qualities of art; it is not to be seen but to be thought about. The project of conceptual writing is driven by a similar logic. It propagates an interest in texts composed not to be read, but in works to be thought about. The importance of conceptual art thought to conceptual writing is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
[451] Bill Friend, 'In the Conceptualist Vacuum: on ~~Kenneth Goldsmith~~ Ken Johnson "*Day*"', *Jacket*, 40 (2010), accessed 23 February 2014, http://jacketmagazine.com/40/freind-johnson-*Day*.shtml.

McCafferey's essay included in the same volume both serve as recent examples.[452] Potential problems with such inaccuracies aside, Goldsmith's statements on his work should not, I suggest, be taken for granted. As Dworkin stresses, labels and prescribed readings that Goldsmith's projects ('attention-attracting, 'so well advertised,')[453] put forward always prove to some extent inaccurate. 'And one should always remember Benjamin's warning,' Dworkin suggests, 'never trust what writers say about their own writing.'[454] I take Dworkin's statement as a starting point, to engage with Goldsmith's *Day* as a highly readable text. With subversion playing a vital role in Goldsmith's literary practices, subversion also seems a critical method pertinent to approaching his work. In fact, repudiating pure thinkership in favour of readership when engaging with *Day*, especially when reading the book alongside its source text, renders particularly striking results. Reading *Day*, and negotiating the salient structures of its narrative, rather than 'just' thinking about it, puts Goldsmith's assertions about his methodology into question and offers an insight into the nature of creativity that transcription as an authorial practice facilitates.

[452] In his introduction to the volume Smith describes *Day* as 'a book-length, page by page transcription of all the words and numbers in the Friday 1 September 2001 edition of *The New York Times*' [J. Mark Smith, Introduction to *Time in Time: Short Poems, Long Poems, and the Rhetoric of the North American Avant-Gardism, 1983-2008* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 14]. McCafferey's essay included in the same volume reads: '*Day* […] testifies to a single mundane act: the transcription of all the words and numbers found in the New York Times edition for Fri*day*, 1 September 2001' [Steve McCaffery, '*Day* Labour' in *Time in Time: Short Poems, Long Poems, and the Rhetoric of the North American Avant-Gardism, 1983-2008,* ed. J. Mark Smith (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 177].
[453] Craig Dworkin, 'Zero Kerning', *Open Letter: A Canadian Journal of Writing and Theory*, 12.7 (2005), 10.
[454] Ibid.



A10 L THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2000
MACY'S
gift
card
works like a gift
certificate,
looks like a
credit card!
macy's giftcard
macy's giftcard
Available in any gift amount from
$10 to $1,000, with complimentary
holiday greeting card. good in any
Macy's, in any department!
macy's
THE Perfect GIFT
Pick up the Macy's Gift Card at any of our stores. Or, pick up the phone and call 1-800-456-2297
Christian Dior
MACY'S PRESENTS 3 STEPS TO BEAUTY
Discover the Christian Dior
3-Step Skincare System
So easy to follow, so great for your skin. So easy to follow, so great for your skin.
Step One/Cleansing: A new range of Cleansing Care Treatments that leave skin fresh and balanced. Cleansers 22.50 Toners $20
Step Two/Time Fighting: Two drops a day of Capture Essentiel Time-Fighting Serum brings smoother, more radiant, younger-looking skin. For all skin types. 1 oz. $48 1.7 oz. $70
Step Three/Firming Expert: Model Lift offers a three-in-one action that you can see and feel. Gives an instant "lift": firmer, more toned skin, and tightened contours. 1 oz. $45 1.7 oz. $68
Plus, create your own 6-piece personalized gift according to your individualized skincare needs, when you purchase any two Christian Dior beauty products, one of which must be skincare.
GEL FRAÎCHEUR
NETTOYAGE À L'EAU
Christian Dior
PARIS
REFRESHING WASH-OFF
CLEANSING GEL
CAPTURE ESSENTIEL
ULTRA-SÉRUM
RÉACTIVATEUR JEUNESSE
TIME-FIGHTING SERUM
Christian Dior
PARIS
MODEL LIFT
CRÈME FERMENTÉ OPTIMALE
LIFT AND FIRM CRÈME

51 / A10 Day

"The Passage des Panoramas, so named in memory of the two panoramas that stood on either side of its entranceway and that disappeared in 1831." Paul d'Ariste, *La Vie et le monde du boulevard* (Paris), p. 14. [A7,7]

The beautiful apotheosis of the "marvel of the Indian shawl," in the section on Indian art in Michelet's *Bible de l'humanité* (Paris, 1864). [A7a,1]

And Jehuda ben Halevy,
In her view, would have been honored
Quite enough by being kept in
Any pretty box of cardboard

With some very swanky Chinese
Arabesques to decorate it,
Like a bonbon box from Marquis
In the Passage Panorama.

Heinrich Heine, *Hebräische Melodien*, "Jehuda ben Halevy," part 4, in *Romanzero*, book 3 (cited in a letter from Wiesengrund).[9] [A7a,2]

Signboards. After the rebus style came a vogue for literary and military allusions. "If an eruption of the hilltop of Montmartre happened to swallow up Paris, as Vesuvius swallowed up Pompeii, one would be able to reconstruct from our signboards, after fifteen hundred years, the history of our military triumphs and of our literature." Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* (Paris, 1858), p. 286 ("Enseignes et affiches"). [A7a,3]

Chaptal, in his speech on protecting brand names in industry: "Let us not assume that the consumer will be adept, when making a purchase, at distinguishing the degrees of quality of a material. No, gentlemen, the consumer cannot appreciate these degrees; he judges only according to his senses. Do the eye or the touch suffice to enable one to pronounce on the fastness of colors, or to determine with precision the degree of fineness of a material, the nature and quality of its manufacture?" ‹Jean-Antoine-Claude› Chaptal, *Rapport au nom d'une commission spéciale chargée de l'examen du projet de loi relatif aux altérations et suppositions de noms sur les produits fabriqués* [Chambre des Pairs de France, session of July 17, 1824], p. 5.—The importance of good professional standing is magnified in proportion as consumer know-how becomes more specialized. [A7a,4]

"What shall I say now of that *coulisse* which, not content with harboring a two-hour illegal session at the Stock Exchange, spawned once again not long ago, in the open air, two demonstrations per day on the Boulevard des Italiens, across from the Passage de l'Opéra, where five or six hundred market speculators, forming a compact mass, followed clumsily in the wake of some forty unlicensed brokers, all the while speaking in low voices like conspirators, while police officers prodded

51 / ✦ Arcades, *Magasins de Nouveautés*, Sales Clerks

FIGURE 35: A PAGE FROM KENNETH GOLDSMITH'S *DAY* AND WALTER BENJAMIN'S *THE ARCADES PROJECT*

Day, I suggest, is highly readable. The transcribed text of *The New York Times* might not offer a particularly riveting reading experience at all times, but it also does not merge into one, uninterrupted textual mass, as both Goldsmith and his critics seem to imply. Rather, it proves easy to follow, with each new piece of information treated as a separate paragraph. What the transcription of all the newspaper content brings to the fore is the 'absent' text, language that is always present on pages of the newspaper even if it is not typically read as such, a form of a paratext printed alongside the main news articles, i.e. language that forms headings, information about the volume and issue, advertisements, blurbs, barcode numbers, pictures' copyright information, etc. Of course, the incorporation of all the otherwise marginal discourse into the body of *Day* makes for a rather singular reading experience, daunting, discouraging and simply boring at times (and boredom, is key to Goldsmith's (un)creative philosophy).[455] But the method and the format of the

[455] For Goldsmith boredom and illegibility are interrelated: 'I am the most boring writer that has ever lived. [...] My books are impossible to read straight through. In fact, every time I have to proofread them before sending them off to the publisher, I fall asleep repeatedly. You really don't need to read my books to get the idea of what they're like; you just need to know the general concept. [...] John Cage said, "If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all." He's right: there's a certain kind of unboring boredom that's fascinating, engrossing, transcendent, and downright sexy.[...] Unboring boring is a

transcription still contribute to a highly readable volume, potentially even more so than when the same text is engaged with in its original context, that is, if we take interest in language rather than just news and information, in all language printed on the page. By foregrounding the language of small print and of marginal content *Day* reverses the textual dynamic of a daily newspaper, turning unreadability into a potentiality of reading. Here, a barcode number, a classified advertisement, and the front page news are all treated with equal level of interest, as literature.

This unacknowledged commitment to readability in *Day* also becomes apparent where the method of transcribing the main body of the newspaper's text is concerned. The content of the NYT is indeed transcribed left to right, top to bottom but, importantly, the process also takes into account and follows the articles themselves. The individual page and its layout inform the texture of *Day*. For example, Eric Schmitt's article, which opens the issue of *The Times*, is printed on the front page and subsequently continued on page A9. Similarly, its opening paragraphs are incorporated into A1 section of *Day* while its second half is transcribed within the A9 section on page 45/A9. In that respect, the readability of individual, reported stories is broken. While the approach is typical for newspaper print, it accounts for an unusual reading experience when encountered in a book format. This layout feature aside, however, the text of the transcribed articles proves easy to follow, as Goldsmith respects both the column and article breaks. Instead of, for example, transcribing the entire lines horizontally, irrespective of the column and article breaks, or retyping complete columns, from the top to the bottom of the page, irrespective of article breaks (both hypothetical approaches that would show a commitment to form and language alone, to ultimate unreadability, subject to automated processing without respect for the content), Goldsmith's transcriptions are dictated solely by the content of the articles he copies. As such, the text of *Day* follows each page, article by article, with all features from the top half of the page transcribed first and then followed by those printed on the bottom half, always retaining the left to right rule. The incorporation of the newspaper paratextual material also does not disturb the reading experience, as each new piece of information in treated as a separate paragraph [compare Figure 36 and Figure 37].

Examples of Goldsmith's manipulation of the flow of the appropriated text are multiple and most explicit in his approach to transcribing picture captions and words

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voluntary state; boring boring is a forced one. [...] Because I volunteered to be bored, it was the most exciting thing I've ever seen [...] Even though I construct boring works, I wouldn't dream of forcing you to sit through an extended reading of my work: at least not without a fair warning, giving you an out, a chance for you to edit the dull parts by fast forwarding, leaving the room, or switching me off' [BB].

embedded in images. For example, Bradsher's article (also on the front page) includes an image in the bottom half the first column of a two-column text. Both the caption and copyright information accompanying the image are transcribed in *Day* but they follow the transcription of the entire article. They do not interrupt the flow of the main article, even though the position of the image within the article would suggest a break in the flow of the text. An image showing Al Gore on a TV screen serves as another case in point. The text extracted from the picture reads: 'The White House'. The text, in the newspaper, however, is obscured and although there is no doubt as to the content of the inscription, the only letters made visible on the page read 'The Wi ouse' [Figure 36]. Rather than simply transcribing, Goldsmith manipulates the text appropriated. This approach seems to reflect the dynamic of reading experience much more than a straightforward automated process of a disengaged, indiscriminate copying. Although hyperbolised, requiring a particularly meticulous, thorough reader, obsessively committed to every word printed on the page, this is a manifestation of a reader's experience nevertheless, methodically progressing through the pages of the paper, article by article, page by page, heavily invested in the content rather than rejecting it. Goldsmith might like to think of himself as a machine,[456] a textual generator, 'a master typist,' and 'an OCR demon,'[457] but it is the fallible, subjective human contribution that informs *Day*. The influence of the authorial gesture is crucial here. It is manifested in attempts at determining the flow and order of the appropriated text and in related mistakes, alterations, and omissions that define a copy as an integral part of the transcription process.

[456] In his approach to writing that is dependent on technologies Goldsmith frequently echoes Warhol's interest in machines and technologies. The affinities between Goldsmith and Warhol will be discussed later in this chapter.
[457] BB.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition
New York: Today, mostly cloudy, high 83. Tonight, warm and muggy, low 72. Tomorrow, cloudy with a few showers, high 80. Yesterday, high 85, low 72. Weather map is on Page A20.

VOL. CXLIX . . . No. 51,498 | NEW YORK, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2000 | $1 beyond the greater New York metropolitan area. | 75 CENTS

PENTAGON LIKELY TO DELAY NEW TEST FOR MISSILE SHIELD

JANUARY DATE EXPECTED

Deployment Decision Would Fall to Next President — Treaty Issue Remains

By ERIC SCHMITT

WASHINGTON, Aug. 31 — The Pentagon will probably postpone the next test of a national missile defense system until January, administration officials said today. Any decision to deploy the antimissile shield now seems certain to pass out of President Clinton's hands to his successor's.

Administration officials had previously said Mr. Clinton would decide this summer on deploying a $60 billion antimissile system that would be ready by 2005. To meet that schedule, the Pentagon has been under heavy pressure for two years to conduct enough flights to show Mr. Clinton and his advisers whether the system was technologically feasible.

But now officials are signaling that Mr. Clinton merely wants to decide whether to go ahead with the program's initial development. The change follows events that included test failures, opposition from Russia as well as European allies and, a legal dispute over how far the system could proceed before violating an important arms control treaty.

To keep that option of initial development open for Mr. Clinton, the Pentagon has requested bids for initial construction of a radar site in Alaska, setting Sept. 7 as the deadline for technical and cost proposals from contractors. The first contracts would have to be awarded by December to permit building to begin next spring and to have a working system in place by 2005. Under the schedule the Pentagon has set in light of conditions in Alaska, it has to start the process soon, subject to later presidential approval.

The more politically volatile decision of whether to field the system — and break the Antiballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 — would be left to the next administration, whether that of Al Gore or George W. Bush.

In a sign of that political evolution, senior military officers, including the program's executive officer, Maj. Gen. Willie Nance of the Army, have argued that there is now no reason to rush more tests. Critics of the program have consistently complained that the military was operating on an artificially fast schedule.

General Nance is not going to conduct a test unless he's fully confident that everything is fully ready for the test, said Lt. Col. Rick Lehner, a spokesman for the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization.

Mr. Clinton is awaiting a recommendation from Defense Secretary William S. Cohen on the project and

Continued on Page A8

Color Photograph/The New York Times

Exit Agassi
The top-seeded Andre Agassi, right, congratulating Arnaud Clément of France yesterday after Clément defeated him, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4, in the second round of the United States Open in Queens. SportsFriday, Page D1.

Bush Approves New Attack Ad Mocking Gore

Democrats Say G.O.P. Has Turned Negative

By JAMES DAO

LOUISVILLE, Ky., Aug. 31 — After struggling for a week to seize the offensive from Vice President Al Gore, aides to Gov. George W. Bush said today that they had approved a new and sharp attack commercial that strikes directly at Mr. Gore's character and mocks his appearance at a fund-raising event at a Buddhist temple four years ago.

The 30-second spot, paid for by the Republican National Committee, will go on the air on Friday in 16 states, and comes just a week after Mr. Bush personally blocked another commercial sponsored by the party that also questioned Mr. Gore's truthfulness. The move exposed rifts within the Republican camp over how to attack Mr. Gore without violating Mr. Bush's vow to keep his campaign positive.

Mr. Bush's aides said they had wholeheartedly approved the contents and tone of the new spot, which they described as "tongue-in-cheek." They said it was a response to critical advertisements run by the Democrats against Mr. Bush.

The commercial shows a television set on a kitchen counter with Mr. Gore on the screen and an unseen woman complaining that the vice president is "reinventing himself on television again." At one point the commercial shows a picture of Mr. Gore at the Buddhist temple event in 1996 and another segment shows him saying, "I took the initiative in creating the Internet." At that point, the narrator says, "Yeah, and I invented the remote control."

Predictably, the commercial sparked accusations and counteraccusations between the two campaigns over which one had "gone negative" first. Mr. Gore's camp wasted no time responding to the commercial, which was widely shown on television news programs and on the Internet during the day.

Mr. Gore also scaled back plans to focus on a patients' bill of rights in the belief that the Republican advertisement would backfire and that the Democrats should not create news that would distract public attention from it.

The new commercial is part of a broader, coordinated effort by the Republicans to raise doubts about Mr. Gore's ethics and integrity, which the Bush campaign clearly views as the vice president's greatest vulnerability.

All this week, Mr. Bush has criti-

Continued on Page A22

PRESIDENT VETOES EFFORT TO REPEAL TAXES ON ESTATES

REPUBLICANS VOW A FIGHT

Clinton, Echoing Gore, Calls Bill Too Costly and Says It Mainly Helps the Rich

By LIZETTE ALVAREZ

WASHINGTON, Aug. 31 — President Clinton today vetoed a Republican-sponsored bill to repeal the federal estate tax and stepped up the election-year sparring over tax cuts and how best to spend the budget surplus.

In remarks in the East Room of the White House, Mr. Clinton said the bill "fails the test of fairness and fiscal responsibility" because it is costly and, according to administration figures, benefits only the wealthiest 2 percent of the population.

The president accused Republicans of threatening to hamstring the booming economy by devising a series of tax cuts that he said would leave little money for Medicare, prescription drug benefits, education and a host of other programs.

Vice President Al Gore has repeatedly lobbed the same charge at his opponent, Gov. George W. Bush of Texas, who supports repealing the estate tax. And in vetoing the bill today, Mr. Clinton adopted the same sort of language heard from Mr. Gore on the campaign trail.

"I believe that this latest bill, this estate tax bill, is part of a series of actions and commitments that, when you add it all up would take us back to the bad old days of deficits, high interest rates and having no money to invest in our common future," Mr. Clinton said, echoing Mr. Gore's attacks on Mr. Bush's tax plans.

The bill "shows a sense of priorities that I believe got us in trouble in the first place in the 1980's, and that if we go back to those priorities, will get us in trouble again," he said.

In Congress, Speaker J. Dennis Hastert of Illinois immediately announced that the House would try to override the veto as its first order of business when it returned next week.

The effort, which requires a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress, is expected to fail in the Senate and may fall short in the House, as well. Neither Republicans nor Mr. Clinton ruled out the possibility of a compromise today.

"The death tax punishes families for being successful," Mr. Hastert said, using the Republicans' preferred term for the estate tax.

"It punishes farmers. It punishes small business owners. It punishes those who have not planned ahead with an array of lawyers and accountants to keep their money in their family," he said.

"Down the road," he added, "it will punish our young entrepreneurs, who are just starting their own lives

Continued on Page A24

Lazio Closes In On Mrs. Clinton In Money Race

By CLIFFORD J. LEVY

Representative Rick A. Lazio may be less well known than his opponent in the New York Senate contest (not to mention the Republican who dropped out), but in terms of fund-raising, he has already entered her league. Mr. Lazio collected $10.7 million in just seven weeks this summer, his aides said yesterday, leaving little doubt that he will have the means to battle for the seat despite his late start.

Mr. Lazio has taken in a total of $19.2 million since jumping into the Senate race in May, nearly as much as Hillary Rodham Clinton, who has been raising money for more than a year and has collected $21.9 million. She raised $3.2 million in the seven-week period this summer, July 1 to Aug. 23.

Mr. Lazio's success with donors suggests that no matter who is on the Republican line — mayor, congressman, school board member — the checks will pour in because of hostility among some people across the country to the Democrat, Mrs. Clinton. And Mr. Lazio, a once-obscure congressman from Suffolk County, has readily harnessed that sentiment.

"I'm Rick Lazio," he wrote in an unusually short, one-page fund-raising letter this summer. "It won't take me six pages to convince you to send me an urgently needed contribution for my United States Senate campaign in New York. It will take

Continued on Page B7

Religion on the Hustings

Signs of Shift in Attitudes Suggest Blurring Of the Line Between Faith and Politics

By GUSTAV NIEBUHR

When Senator Joseph I. Lieberman urged a greater role for religion in public life in campaign speeches this week, he touched off a new round in the sharp but unsettled debate over the role that personal beliefs should play in American politics.

News Analysis

Some critics of Mr. Lieberman's remarks, including the Anti-Defamation League, cast the issue in terms of separation of church and state, suggesting that the senator had infringed that principle.

But another way to look at what Mr. Lieberman, a Connecticut Democrat, said is to ask whether American culture has changed enough of late so that his remarks are more acceptable, socially and politically, than before.

Those who say such a change has taken place can cite various reasons — public unease over the political scandals of the late 1990's, for example, or the longer-term emergence of religious conservatives as a political force or a less tangible but pervasive interest in the personal over the political.

"I think the Christian Coalition has added to our dialogue on politics and religion," said Paul Simon, the former Democratic senator from Illinois, referring both to the conservative organization of that name and also to the broader political movement of religious conservatives. "Now, some of that is not good, but some of that is good, too."

Mr. Simon, who now directs the Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University, said he thought Mr. Lieberman had made his remarks "with great care." But he also said that some of the religious language used in the presidential campaign had left him uncomfortable.

"My overall impression," Mr. Simon said, "is, the deeply religious people don't talk about it as much."

Mr. Lieberman, the first Jew on a major American presidential ticket, said in a speech last Sunday that Americans needed to "renew the dedication of our nation and ourselves to God and God's purpose." And while he said the Constitution "wisely separates church from state," he added that there must be a place for faith in the nation's public

Continued on Page A23

The ad combines television images of Mr. Gore with scornful dialogue and a not yet operational Web address.

Firestone Struggles in Center Of an Ever-Widening Storm

By KEITH BRADSHER

NASHVILLE, Aug. 31 — Rarely has a leading global company faced such an extraordinary confluence of problems. Its flagship product blamed for scores of deaths, its biggest customer undermining its every defense, its stock price plunging along with consumer confidence, its top executive summoned before an angry Congress.

This is not how Firestone planned to celebrate its 100th birthday this summer. The centennial, some marketing experts say, has turned into a debacle for one of America's most familiar brand names.

Associated Press

STRIKE THREATS Bridgestone/Firestone faces a possible strike tomorrow. Union members rallied in Nashville yesterday. Page C1.

In Washington today, regulators added 26 deaths to the 62 previously attributed to failures of Firestone tires in the United States. In Venezuela, one of 17 countries where Firestone tires have been recalled, the government's consumer agency asked the state prosecutor to bring criminal charges against Firestone. It also called for prosecuting the Ford Motor Company, saying the design of Ford Explorer sport utility vehicles that were equipped with Firestone tires contributed to dozens of deaths in crashes there.

Until today, Ford officials insisted that their company would stand by Firestone as a supplier. But Jacques Nasser, Ford's chief executive, refused during a news conference in Dearborn, Mich., to reiterate that stance. "This has been an extremely difficult and disappointing period in our relationship, and we'll take this a day at a time," he said.

Executives of Bridgestone/Firestone and its Japanese parent, the Bridgestone Corporation, insist the Firestone brand will survive. John Lampe, the American subsidiary's executive vice president, said here this morning that to restore customers' confidence, the company would soon appoint an independent investigator to look into the company's products and practices.

But Firestone soon may face a fresh storm. As Mr. Lampe spoke in an interview at an airport hotel, angry union workers prepared to dem-

Continued on Page C6

Fire Raises Doubts About River Town's Boom

By ANDREW JACOBS

EDGEWATER, N.J., Aug. 31 — A day after a devastating fire here, Ann Ring stood in front of her heat-scorched home, its vinyl siding dripping like melted cheese, and marveled at a Hudson River view she thought she had lost forever.

As thick smoke rose from stubborn pockets of the blaze, Mrs. Ring said she was thankful that the wall of flame had been kept from consuming her home. It had destroyed a luxury apartment complex under construction, nine nearby houses and an occupied apartment building.

But like many residents of this former factory town, Mrs. Ring, 58, said she was also angry — about the wave of development that is quickly transforming Edgewater and other waterfront towns into the so-called Gold Coast.

"This used to be a quaint place," said Mrs. Ring, a school crossing guard. "But they've gone and put up these ugly monsters. They're ruining the place."

Coming a month after fires ripped through two Jersey City high-rises, the blaze on Wednesday night raised new questions about whether development is outstripping the ability of local governments to regulate it and favoring the needs of developers over residents.

With Edgewater's population of 6,000 expected to grow by as much as 2,000 in the next few years, many residents worry that growth will overwhelm this narrow river town, which is just two blocks wide and four miles long. "We have one main road and three paid firemen," said Valory Bardinas, a City Council member. "This development is not only jeopardizing our quality of life, but our safety, too."

As firefighters continued to spray arcs of water on the smoldering

Continued on Page B7

INSIDE

Last Resort for Parents
When parents are at wits' end and their children — often adolescents — are out of control, some turn to government, relinquishing their children to foster care. PAGE B1.

Drought's Toll in Texas
This summer's record stretch of 82 days without rain in North Texas has dried up lakes, helped spark 650 fires and left thousands of acres of crops wasted. PAGE A14

Type-A Mayor Slows Down
Fatigued by cancer treatments and sidelined by his party, Rudolph W. Giuliani, New York's round-the-clock mayor, has slowed to a less frenetic pace. PAGE B1

Former Lucchese Boss Dies
Anthony Corallo, thought to have been the oldest surviving mobster to have risen from one of New York City's five organized crime families, died in prison at 87. PAGE A23

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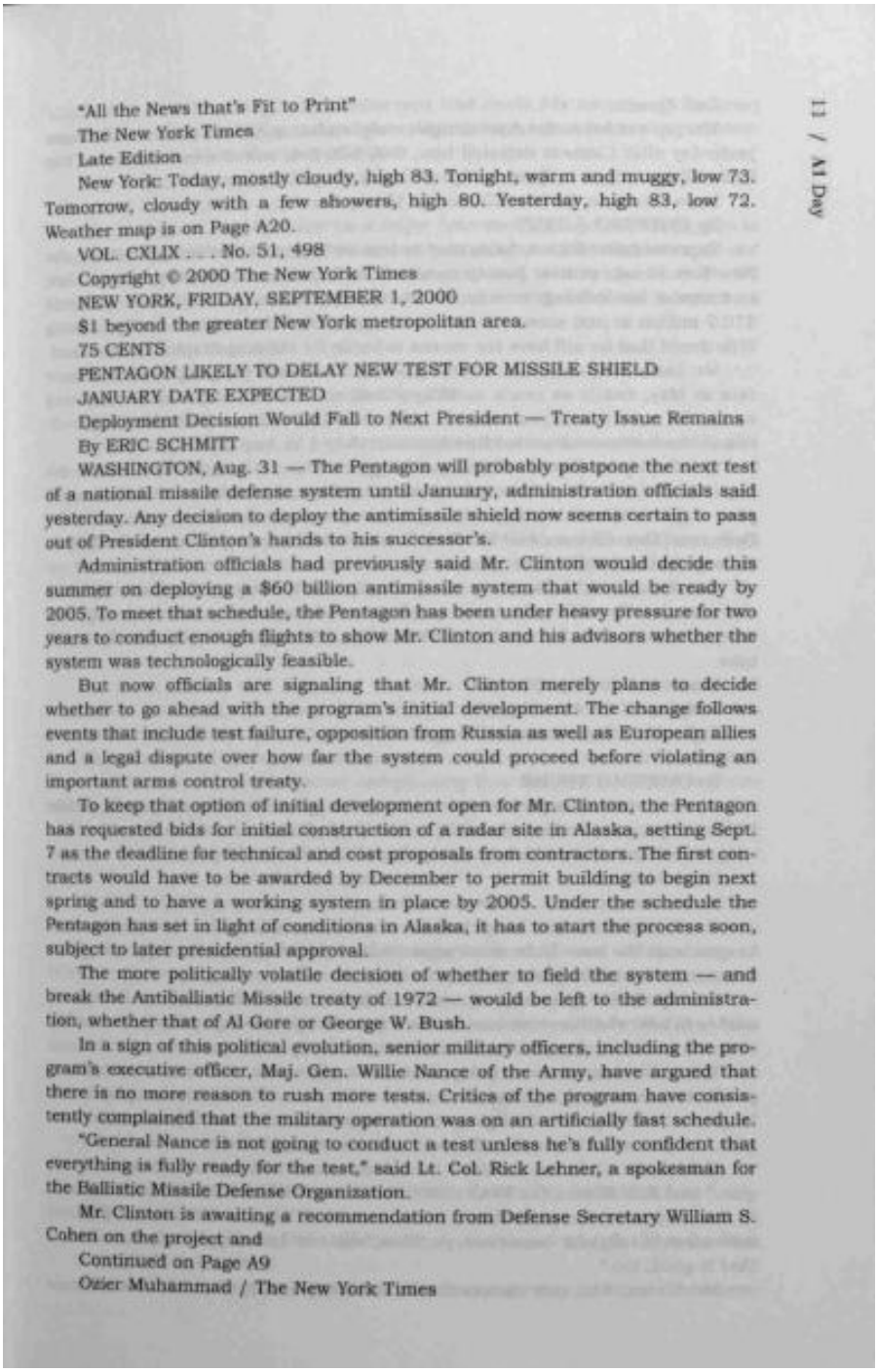
FIGURE 36: *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, SEPTEMBER 1, 2000, PAGE A1



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VOL. CXLIX . . . No. 51, 498
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NEW YORK, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2000
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To keep that option of initial development open for Mr. Clinton, the Pentagon has requested bids for initial construction of a radar site in Alaska, setting Sept. 7 as the deadline for technical and cost proposals from contractors. The first contracts would have to be awarded by December to permit building to begin next spring and to have a working system in place by 2005. Under the schedule the Pentagon has set in light of conditions in Alaska, it has to start the process soon, subject to later presidential approval.
The more politically volatile decision of whether to field the system — and break the Antiballistic Missile treaty of 1972 — would be left to the administration, whether that of Al Gore or George W. Bush.
In a sign of this political evolution, senior military officers, including the program's executive officer, Maj. Gen. Willie Nance of the Army, have argued that there is no more reason to rush more tests. Critics of the program have consistently complained that the military operation was on an artificially fast schedule.
"General Nance is not going to conduct a test unless he's fully confident that everything is fully ready for the test," said Lt. Col. Rick Lehner, a spokesman for the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization.
Mr. Clinton is awaiting a recommendation from Defense Secretary William S. Cohen on the project and
Continued on Page A9
Ozier Muhammad / The New York Times

11 / A1 Day

FIGURE 37: KENNETH GOLDSMITH, *DAY*, PAGE 11/A1

A number of further discrepancies can be noted between *Day* and its source text. For example, the top of the left column on page A18 in *The New York Times* includes an advertisement which reads 'Labour Break/Save Up To 30% During Our Labour Day Sale!' [458] 'Labour Break' is, however, omitted in *Day* and the

[458] *The New York Times*, 1 September 2000, A18.

corresponding passage reads: 'Save Up To 30% During Our Labour Day Sale!'[459] A transcription of an article from page E34 of the paper also does not reflect the source faithfully. In Goldsmith's hands *The New York Times*'s 'Cabaret Guide' turns into a 'Cabaret Buide' and 'Hiroyuki Ito,' an author of the accompanying photograph, features as 'Hiroyki Ito.'[460] Probably most notably, the entire page E24 [Figure 38] is missing from *Day* and Goldsmith's transcription of section E23 that closes on page 686 is followed by E25 on page 687. Whether this is an intentional omission (the TV listing grid constituting page E24 would prove a staggeringly laborious transcription project), an oversight, or perhaps a reflection on Goldsmith's copy of the September 1, 2000 issue of *The New York Times* (given the typical two-sided structure of a newspaper page, E24 could not be missing unless E23 was missing as well, but might there, perhaps, be an issue with the way E24 was printed in Goldsmith's copy, causing problems with its legibility?), *Day* emerges as a manifestation of Goldsmith's experience of that singular copy of the paper; it is Kenneth Goldsmith's *Times* rather than *The New York Times* that is rendered in the process of transcription.

FIGURE 38: *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, SEPTEMBER 1, 2000, PAGE E24

459 Kenneth Goldsmith, *Day* (Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 2003), 80. Hereafter D.
460 Ibid, 745.

Read as such, *Day* becomes synonymous with subjectivity and singularity of an act of repetition, always, as Derrida would have it, presented as repetition with *différance*. The law of repetition that governs the creative methodology of *Day* presupposes an occurrence of sameness – where there is repetition, sameness is inevitably manifested. But as Goldsmith's attempt at transcription seems to indicate, alterity always defines acts of repetition; the repetition of the same[461] fails to produce an identical copy. The nature of *Day's* copy, considered as such can be read as an explicit manifestation of the Derridean notion of iterability as discussed in Chapter 1. The juxtaposition of alterity and repetition is important here in that, for Derrida, the two are interdependent; alterity can only be defined through its relation to repetition, where the possibility of alterity and repeatability are inevitably conflated to form the notion of iterability. Iterability signifies a combination of repetition (that, which implies sameness) and difference (that which implies alterity). As such, a Derridean repetition, and, as I suggest, an act of conceptual literary transcription such as *Day*, effects an altered version of that which it repeats, that which links repetition to alterity. The act of repetition as performed by Goldsmith echoes Derrida's model. It does not assume a repetition of the same, rather it complicates the boundaries between the copy and original to turn into a play of dissemination, that which, as Derrida explains, disturbs established models of authority and, hence, authorship. If works of iterative poetics embody Derridean 'marks of dissemination,'[462] then transcription as a creative practice applies the name 'poetry' to that which it deconstructs, wrenches apart the traditional, hierarchical opposition between literary and non-literary discourses, between poetry and the system of all of what is

[461] Both Derrida and Deleuze discuss the notion of the repetition of the same/Same. For Derrida, it is in the repetition of the same that a possibility of something new resides (what he calls the invention of the other). In 'Plato's Pharmacy' Derrida discusses repetition as contingent on sameness: if there is repetition, there is sameness; there can only be repetition if it is of the same, but the repetition of the same cannot be identical [Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination,* trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Continuum, 2011), 67-185]. Derrida's notion of the same is closely associated with his understanding of *différance*. In 'Signature Event Context' the notion of repetition of the same is developed as iterability of the mark. It is this impossibility of repetition that I am particularly interested in here as it is evoked in Deleuze's thinking as well. While Deleuze distinguished between two kinds of repetition – the secondary repetition that emerges from the inadequacy of concepts and the primary repetition, which is inherently affirmative – it is the latter I will focus on here. Unlike the secondary repetition, primary repetition is, as Delezue puts it, 'dynamic'; 'the first repetition is repetition of the Same, explained by the identity of the concept or representation; the second includes difference, and includes itself in the alterity of the Idea' [Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2010), 27]. I will adopt Derrida's spelling of 'the same' instead of Deleuze's 'the Same'.

[462] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 21.

customarily opposed to poetry.[463] Seen as such, it turns into an essence of the Iterative turn.

3.2. THE EVENT: KENNETH GOLDSMITH, *THE DAY*

'Repetition,' writes Simon Morgan Wortham, 'as it opens into new horizons [...] transforms the meaning of the term it repeats, as something on an event, perhaps.'[464] An interesting correlation emerges here between the nature of the text generated by iterative acts and what Derrida describes as an event, a trajectory key, I suggest, to defining the methods and preoccupations of Goldsmith's uncreativity, and iterative poetics more broadly. For Derrida, an event is that which is singular, irreplaceable: 'an event is something that vertically befalls me when I didn't see it coming,'[465] 'the event's eventfulness depends on this experience of the impossible.'[466] A Derridean event always implies a surprise, that which could not be anticipated. This assumption significantly influences any possibility of, in Derrida's words, speaking the event; of recording and reporting of that which is happening. Rather, any engagement with the event is always a retrospective act. It is a mode of referencing the past marked by the impossibility of being fully and unambiguously reconstructed. If repeated, whatever form the repetition might take, the event is always characterised by a condition of a *différance*. As Derrida argues,

> the saying of the event as a statement of knowing of information, [...] this saying of the event is always somewhat problematic because the structure of saying is such that it always comes after the event [...] it is bound to a measure of generality, iterability and repeatability, it always misses the singularity of the event.[467]

This certain impossible possibility of saying the event that derives from its singular nature, defies any possibility of a repetition of an event in itself, its 'unmasterable singularity [...] evades,' as Wortham points out, 'its own appropriation by any given language, discourse, or context.'[468] Any repetition of an event, then, any attempt at saying or writing an event – a repetition in/through language – is inherently

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[463] This statement is a paraphrase, in Goldsmith's fashion, of a passage from Derrida's *Dissemination*. The corresponding excerpt reads: 'we will try to determine the law which compels us [...] to apply the name "writing" to that which critiques, deconstructs, wretches apart the traditional , hierarchical opposition between writing and writing and speech, between writing and the [...] system of all of what is customarily opposed to writing' [Derrida, *Dissemination*, 4].
[464] Simon Morgan Wortham, *Derrida: Writing Events* (London: Continuum, 2008), 15.
[465] Jacques Derrida, 'A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,' *Critical Inquiry*, 33.2 (2007), 452. Hereafter ACIP.
[466] Ibid, 451.
[467] Ibid, 446.
[468] Wortham, 4.

characterised by alterity. When read in this context, *Day* becomes an explicit manifestation of such an impossibility of repetition. The Derridean impossibility of saying the event translates here into an impossibility of an exact, unaltered transcription of the issue of *The New York Times*, as made explicit in manipulations, alterations, and omissions that characterise *Day*'s textuality.

The structure of the evental iteration that constitutes *Day* is also important here. Where Goldsmith's attempt at re-recording the event(s) of September 1, 2000 brings to the fore the dynamic of information dissemination and access to the event itself – always negotiated through the discourse of the media – 'the saying of the event [presupposes] some sort of inevitable neutralisation of the event by its iterability [...] saying always harbours the possibility of resaying.'[469] The resaying of the news from September 1, 2000 in *Day* is not so much a repetition of the event in itself as an iteration of the retelling of the event as mediated through the newspaper print, of an impression of the event, in Derrida's terms. Characteristically, for Derrida, 'the event is made up of the "thing" in itself (that which happens or comes) and the impression (itself at once "spontaneous" and "controlled") that is given, left or made by the so-called "thing."'[470] The information machine of *The New York Times* produces an impression of those events and not the events themselves. It remains always removed in space and time from the event itself. The issue of *The New York Times* from September 1 is as current as a newspaper can be, though still characterised by a certain belatedness in relation to the event it reiterates. The events reported on September 1, 2000 are the 'thing' of August 31, 2000. The 'thing' of September 1 only translates into newspaper print a day later, to be written on September 2, 2000, inevitably informed, to paraphrase Derrida, by the system that produces the information about it and the specific medium – here a newspaper – employed to facilitate the speaking.

This belatedness of the evental iteration as a temporal framework that determines the possibilities of speaking the event manifests itself particularly poignantly in a juxtaposition of *Day* and *The Day* (2009), another transcription project by Kenneth Goldsmith. *The Day* is composed by exactly the same means as *Day*. It is a word-for-word transcription of an issue of *The New York Times*. But while *Day* focuses on a 'Friday before Labour Day weekend of 2000 [...] a slow news *Day*,'

[469] ACIP, 452.
[470] Jacques Derrida, 'Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides: A dialogue with Jacques Derrida', in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, Giovanna Barradori, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 89. Hereafter ARSS.

when, as Goldsmith describes it, 'just the regular stuff happened, nothing special,'[471] *The Day* iterates news printed in the paper on September 11, 2001. *Day* represents a day like any other, *The Day* is synonymous with a watershed event in modern history. But the events of 9/11 themselves serve only as a background to the text of the *The Day*, only present on the pages of the issue of *The New York Times* retrospectively. What is happening on 9/11 will only be said on 9/12.

Echoes of Hans-Peter Feldmann's *9:12 Frontpage* (2002) reverberate in Goldsmith's project, reflecting affinities not only with this specific visual arts example but also with the broader aesthetic tendencies that, as I suggest, are characteristic of the iterative forms of writing discussed here. The same propensity for the documentary source of appropriation already touched upon in the context of erasure writing transpires here. Feldmann's *9:12* characteristically focuses on the impression of the events of 9/11 by collecting and juxtaposing a range of 151 newspaper front pages published on September 12, 2001, all incorporating images of the attacks on the Twin Towers [Figure 39]. The same or very similar images consistently reappear here, the repetitiveness determined by a very limited number of press agencies responsible for their distribution. In Feldmann's project the structure of iteration not only produces a copy but is also produced by tools of reproduction, here in a form of globalised information dissemination mechanisms. The repetition, for Feldmann, manifests the very logic of the event, intensified by the contemporary information dissemination technologies, as if asking, after Derrida: 'what would "September 11" have been without television,'[472] or, more broadly, without the media. Hence, 9/11 emerges here as a topic of particular relevance to aesthetics and poetics influenced by contemporary technological change and modes of information dissemination. It is not simply as an event of high historical significance, but one considered to be the most highly mediated in recent history and, hence, inherently iterative, as discussed in Chapter 2. This trajectory and its significance to thinking about iteration as a means of responding to events represented as such will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

[471] BB.
[472] ARSS, 108.

FIGURE 39: HANS-PETER FELDMANN'S *9:12 FRONTPAGE* AS PART OF *ARCHIVE FEVER - USES OF THE DOCUMENT IN CONTEMPORARY ART*, 18 JANUARY – 4 MAY, 2008, AT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY, NEW YORK.

But this multiplicity of repetitions of a repetition in *9:12* is further hyperbolised here. Pages of the newspapers that constitute Feldmann's installation are physical copies as well as the Derridean impressions. Rather than an archive of the 'original' mediated impressions of the event – the actual newspaper pages – *9:12* is a collection of their copies, photographs of the pages, taken against white card and subsequently digitally printed. As such, *9:12* is a repetition of the impression of the 'thing' and a repetition in itself, a project which enacts its own iterativity. Hence, a multi-layered structure of repetition emerges here, similar to that formulated in Goldsmith's *Day* and *The Day*. If, read in the context of Derrida's framework, the 9/11 attacks are conceived of as the event, the news reported on September 12, 2001 as the delayed, impossible saying of the 'thing', its impression, in itself already a repetition, then the *9:12*, like *Day* and *The Day* actualises a repetition of the impression, a repetition of the repetition, a copy marked by its inherent alterity, repeating an elusive original that defies any possibility of an act of copying. Although uncannily similar, often incorporating the same images, unambiguously repeating the familiar iconography, each repetition of the event that *9:12* puts forward is different. The familiar images, recontextualised, inscribed into typographies specific to each reproduced publication, and discussed in different languages, engender the nature of

alterity. Framed differently, these copies are an embodiment of iteration, of the impossibility of copying immanent in acts of excessive reproduction. In his approach, Feldmann seems to reproduce the ubiquity of reproduction itself; marking, through the focus on collecting and multiplicity of forms, the impossibility of accessing the event, the elusiveness of the original in the light of the pervasiveness of its repetition, as mediated, and, inevitably altered through media discourse.

9:12, then, derives from the same temporal transference that characterises both *Day* and *The Day*, all twice removed from the 'thing' itself. Determined by the nature of newspaper print *The Day* is and at the same time is not a document of the events of the 9/11, it does and it does not repeat them. The events that *The Day* re-reports are not the events, or impressions of 9/11 but those of 9/10, a day before the future to come. The words of *The Day* constitute that which was being read and spoken about while the event of 9/11 was unveiling, rather than a report on the events of 9/11 themselves. The 'Metropolitan Forecast,' for example, reports good weather in the lower 80s, while Arts pages comment on Michel Houellebecq's discussion of Islam as a dangerous religion:

Metropolitan Forecast

D8 L THE NEW YORK TIMES TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001
Metropolitan Forecast
today Less humid, sunshine
High 79. Noticeably less humid air will filter into the metropolitan region on. Brisk winds from the northwest. High pressure building east from the Great Lakes will promote mainly sunny skies. Daytime readings will peak in the lower 80's.
tonight Clear, lighter winds
Low 62. Skies will be clear overnight as high pressure crests near the Middle Atlantic Coast. Humidity will remain low, and temperatures will fall to around 60 degrees in many spots.
tomorrow Mainly sunny
High 76. Sunshine and just a few clouds will fill the sky. Breezes will turn and blow from the south ahead of a cold front approaching from Canada.

Islam

e2 the new york times, tuesday, september 11, 2001
ARTS ABROAD
Continued From First Arts Page
On Islam, Mr. Houellebecq went still further, deriding his estranged mother for converting to Islam and proclaiming that, while all monotheistic religions were "cretinous," "the most stupid religion is Islam." And he added: "When you read the Koran, you give up. At least the Bible is
Sexual tourism
and inflammatory
remarks about
Palestinians.

> very beautiful because Jews have an extraordinary literary talent." And later, noting that "Islam is a dangerous religion," he said it was condemned to disappear, not only because God does not exist but also because it was being undermined by capitalism.[473]

Read on the morning of 9/11, Houellebecq's is an innocent statement, a comment on his mother and a discussion of religion more broadly. But in the context of the historical framework created by events that take place later in the day, to be reported on 9/12, these innocuous fragments of news reports and commentary become loaded with meaning, facts, and affects. The pages of *The Day* highlight the future that was never to come, to quote Goldsmith, 'full of events that never happened: sales that were cancelled, listings for events that were indefinitely postponed [...].'[474] The rapture of 9/11 that results in the future which is never realised emerges here, to borrow from Mark Currie, 'in a condition of absolute unforeseeability.'[475] As Currie writes,

> there is future we can predict, and there is the unexpected [...] Preeminent unexpected events, such as 9/11, the tsunami in the Indian ocean in 2004, the financial meltdown of 2008, are moments that highlight our everyday reliance on and expertise in prediction.'[476]

The event, Currie observes (echoing Derrida), is 'the occurrence of the unforeseeable.' [477] For Derrida, 'an event implies surprise, exposure, the unanticipatable [...] if there is an event, it must never be something that is predicted or planned, or even really decided upon.'[478] In the case of *The Day*, the unexpected occurrence of 9/11 turns those events anticipated in the pages of the 9/11 issue of *The Times,* and never realised, into a poignant Bergsonian 'unforeseeable nothing which changes everything.'[479] *The Day*, then, is a manifestation of that which has not yet taken place, an effort to fix in print the non-existence of the future. It is a rendering of the characteristic unforeseeablitiy of the event, a feature that at the same time serves as a prominent criterion of what Currie identifies as newsworthiness. An event conceptualised as such is 'of a kind that bestows an epochal canonicity upon the unexpected event,'[480] the unexpected, the surprise is a category that determines the persistence of an event in time, history and the archive.

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[473] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Two Poems from "The Day"', *Poetry*, July/August 2009, accessed 25 February 2014, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/237062. The complete text of *The Day* has not, to date, been published.
[474] BB.
[475] Mark Currie, *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 31. Hereafter TU.
[476] Ibid, 55.
[477] Ibid, 35.
[478] ACIP, 441.
[479] Henri Bergson, 'The Possible and the Real', quoted in Currie, 32.
[480] TU, 7.

Thinking about *Day* and *The Day* in the context of Currie's philosophy of surprise allows for a differentiation between the textual dynamic that governs these two transcriptions. The implications of the iterative project put forward in *The Day* diverge from the propositions of *Day* because of the historical context in which this particular day is distinguished from any other day, bringing to the fore, yet again, conceptualism's propensity for the context as an agent of meaning. This dynamic that marks acts of reporting on the events of 9/10 at the backdrop of the events of 9/11 emerges as a textual embodiment of the impossibility of saying the event. Even if not overtly incorporated into the discourse of *The Day*, the events of 9/11 are inevitably inscribed into the pages of *The Day*. This iteration is determined by the structure of alterity. The dynamic of iteration of news is characteristically marked by 'the dialectic of what is to come and what has already taken place;'[481] a difference between the lived time and its iterative representation. The transition that an act of transcription engenders can be seen as a shift from what Currie describes as an open future and towards a closed one. The remediation from the anticipatory newspaper print to its iteration in the book form is a transition from the temporal openness of the future still to come, to a closure characterised by an engagement with history that has already happened. The question of foreknowledge of the event resulting from the temporal removal of the transcription from the event itself, as a repetition of a repetition, determines the reading of *The Day* as a document of 9/11.

Written into such a structure of information apparatus, both *Day* and *The Day* should be seen as defined by an iterative relationship with the impression rather than the 'thing' as mediated through *The New York Times* on September 1, 2000 and September 11, 2001 respectively. *Day* and *The Day* embody the structure of repetition of an event and hence exemplify the only possible act of iteration; while the event in itself, the 'thing', defies repetition – it is, in the end, impossible, to say the event – the impression is always repeatable and iterable, the 'saying always harbours the possibility of resaying'[482] – an assertion inherent in the conceptual framework of *Day* and *The Day*. The impression is always inherently marked by its iterability. It is that which repeats and is repeatable at the same time. As such, the impression must be, by nature, altering the 'thing' which it repeats and be altered in any process of resaying in which it might participate. An impression is always inscribed into an iterative discursive structure, it is always a repetition. Hence, *Day* and *The Day* emerge as repetitions of a repetition, rather than of an event as such; they repeat, but repeat 'no-thing,' the act of iteration that produces both texts resides in a repetition of writing.

[481] Ibid, 15.
[482] ACIP, 452.

As such, the act of production of *Day* and *The Day*, and acts of literary transcription more broadly, can be conceived of, I suggest, as events of writing, as the 'thing' but a thing of discourse. Acts of transcription defined as such perform their own textuality; *The Day* is a textual entity that, in line with Derrida's assertion, does not just 'say the event, it makes it, it constitutes the event. It is a speech event, a saying event.'[483] In this structure of textual production a sense of alternative origins of writing emerges, which, in turn opens possibilities for alternative thinking about writing that is iterative, yet original.

3.3. THE SITUATION: KENNETH GOLDSMITH, *THE WEATHER*

The attacks interrupted what was otherwise an ordinary day in America. It is this rapture, the occurrence of the unexpected event that transforms a day into *The Day*, not any event, but, to borrow from Derrida, a major event. As Derrida noted, September 11, 2001 gave an impression of being a major event, one that 'should be so unforeseeable and irruptive that it disturbs even the horizon of the concept or essence on the basis of which we believe we recognise an even *as such*.'[484] Nothing is less certain than a major event, it is a 'singular event through and through.'[485] Derrida characteristically problematises the possibility of an experience of such an event and hence raises question about the categorisation of 9/11 as the major event. But for the sake of the argument, 9/11 will be here read as an example of a major event, one that 'inflicts a wound in the everyday course of history, in the ordinary repetition and anticipation of experience.'[486] This is a wound that, in the case of a major event, 'remains open by our terror before the future and not only the past,'[487] a wound as rapture perpetually to come.

Rapture defines Goldsmith's *The Weather*, which like *Day* and *The Day* is a transcription of news. The text is compiled using a year's worth of verbatim transcriptions of hourly, one-minute long weather forecasts from 1010 WINS, New York, a local news-only radio station. The transcription opens on December 21, 2002 and continues, as Goldsmith declares, for one year exactly. The entries are not dated but the volume is divided into four chapters, to reflect the four seasons. Each one-minute broadcast bulletin, when transcribed, is transformed into a separate paragraph. As such, *The Weather* is put together in an ultimate uncreative act;

[483] Ibid. 446.
[484] ARSS, 90.
[485] Ibid, 91.
[486] Ibid, 96.
[487] Ibid.

'nothing, one surmises,' and Perloff speculates, 'is invented or added or even altered [...] what you see is [...] what you get.'[488] But in *The Weather* a number of discrepancies between the source and the appropriation can be observed. Similarly to *Day*, *The Weather* is marked by a range of clear manifestations of Goldsmith's authorial interventions that introduce an element of subjectivity and singularity into an otherwise seemingly objective, uncreative text – the language of the weather forecast. As Perloff notes, in line with Goldsmith's declarations, *The Weather* should comprise 365 reports. Instead, only 293 entries are included (Perloff counted), 'with summer being the shortest season (sixty-four entries) and winter the longest, with eighty-four.'[489] Most likely, the missing reports are a reflection on Goldsmith's activity, marking periods of Goldsmith's absence from New York, his inability to listen to the forecast, or, perhaps, are a manifestation of simple forgetfulness and unintentional omissions; 'the text assembles not the weather but Kenny's weather, witnessing his comings and goings in the course of a year.'[490]

The content of *The Weather*, then, just like that of *Day*, proves revealing where the nature of authorship is concerned. The dynamic of textual production inherent in acts of transcription explicitly comes to the fore. Goldsmith might invent nothing, create no original content, but both *The Weather* and *Day* evoke creative, authorial decisions that an act of transcription necessitates. These are exposed in a range of omissions in and distortions of the source but also transpire on the level of form: the size of *Day* corresponds to the dimensions of Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (a conscious decision on Goldsmith's part); sections of *Day* are numbered according to a system devised by Goldsmith; dates in *The Weather* are omitted, while individual weather bulletins are transcribed as self-contained paragraphs. 'The act of transcription,' Goldsmith admits, 'as a hands-off, bone-dry act of coldness is a fallacy; no matter what we do we leave our imprint – and a very personal imprint at that – on our work.'[491]

The text of *The Weather*, similarly to *Day*, turns into an embodiment of the impossibility of transcription. But an important distinction has to be made between *The Weather* and *Day* with reference to their sources. It is the instability and unpredictability of the source material that lies at the heart of the textuality of *The Weather*. Unlike a transcription of printed source, an engagement with the spoken word of the radio news contributes to a poetic text that creates a very different reading

[488] Marjorie Perloff, '"Moving Information": On Kenneth Goldsmith's *The Weather*', *Open Letter*, 12.7 (2005), 85.
[489] Ibid, 88.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Kenneth Goldsmith, quoted in Perloff, 'Moving', 88.

experience. Reframing information in both *Day* and *The Weather* destabilises the form of the original but renders significantly distinct results. The text of *The New York Times*, transcribed, although undeniably deconstructed and defamiliarised, remains inherently readable. Written words, even when appropriated in the act of transcription, remain words on the page, retain their readability – the typical vocabularies, syntax and stylistic features of a discourse formulated to be written down. In contrast, reading *The Weather* draws immediate attention to the decontextualisation of the text, to the inappropriateness of the discourse for the format in which it is presented, peppered with 'errrs', 'umms', hesitations, pauses, fragmentations characteristic of the spoken language here transformed into writing. An element of unpredictability marks the experience of working with the source used here, stemming from the mode of transmission of the original text but also its subject. The weather itself introduces an element of chance, of surprise. The weather forecast relies on and is determined by 'the chanciness of the weather,'[492] as Perloff puts it – by the chance of showers, of rain, of the sun, always inherently governed by, at the same time, the repetition of the obvious and the formulaic and its unpredictability. The situation of the weather report, then, is particularly conducive to change, rapture, disturbance, hence, to return to Derrida, the inscription of the event.

Seen as such, the weather report as radio broadcast and as poetry are paradigmatic of the structure of iteration as an event of writing. This dynamic is expressed particularly explicitly in the 'Spring' section of *The Weather*:

> Oh, we are looking at, uh, weather, uh, across, uh, Iraq obviously here for the next several days, uh, we have, uh, actually some good, good weather is expected. They did have a sandstorm here earlier, uh, over the last twelve to twenty-four hours those winds have subsided and will actually continue to subside. Uh, there will be enough of a wind across the southern portion of the country that still may cause some blowing sand tomorrow. Otherwise we're looking at clear to partly cloudy skies tonight and tomorrow, uh, the weekend, uh, it is good weather, and then we could have a storm, uh, generating some strong winds, uh, for Sunday night and Monday, uh, even the possibility of a little rain in Baghdad. Uh, currently we have, uh, uh, increasing cloudiness, uh, forecast locally tonight, uh, it's gonna be brisk and chilly, temperatures getting down into the middle-thirties, and then some, uh, intermittent rain is expected tomorrow and tomorrow night. It'll become steadier and heavier late in the day and, uh, actually a pretty good soaking tomorrow night. Uh, temperatures getting into the mid-forties tomorrow, and then staying in the forties tomorrow night.[493]

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[492] Perloff, 'Moving', 89.
[493] Kenneth Goldsmith, *The Weather* (Los Angeles: Make Now Press, 2005), 39. Hereafter W.

Rather unexpectedly, in these opening passages of part 2 of *The Weather*, spring in New York arrives with a report on weather in Iraq. Triggered by the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 the introduction of weather reports from Baghdad, alongside the daily New York bulletins, epitomises the structure of the event and, as a result, of a characteristic textuality that governs the modes of iterative textual production. It is a rapture in the structure of the everyday, the expected and the familiar. I would like to suggest that the weather forecast here can be viewed in terms of Badiou's notion of a situation – an infinite and multiple place of taking place – with the Iraq war emerging as Badiou's event; the exception to the situation. The taking place of the event disturbs the situation, it provides a rapture evocative of Derrida's understanding of the event and Currie's notion of surprise. Once the event occurs, the situation changes. WINS weather, in its pre-Iraq-war form, deals in the mundane, banal, local and familiar; it centres around the situation, within which events sometimes happen, events that disturb the situation.

For Badiou, 'an event disturbs a normal situation by not revealing the elements that make up its composition.'[494] Such impossibility of determining the structure of the event also points to a challenge associated with the possibility of its iteration; in line with Badiou's thinking, an event is that which is not. *The Weather* can be read as a literal rendering of such a trajectory. The Iraq war operates both as a presence and absence within the frame of the New York weather forecast. The event itself is not revealed, not introduced or spoken of by the weather reporters but its occurrence is explicitly marked by the introduction of the information about Baghdad weather. In the context, the war is not the thing but rather a form of an impression, to return to Derrida's taxonomy, it is absent from the radio news and subsequently *The Weather*, but it, nevertheless, is. As a consequence of this ontological status, its being manifests itself here, I suggest, as a linguistic being, or an event of language to borrow from Agamben,[495] one made particularly explicit in the context of an event of writing as being that is in repetition and one that is produced by it. The materialisation of the radio bulletin as writing brings to the fore the dynamic of the

494 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2007), 181.

495 For Agamben it is necessary to think the event of language because any 'antinomy of the individual and universal has its origin in language' [Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 9]. As such, it is the event of language that creates a situation for a negotiation of a new, antinomical way of conceptualising the relationship between the individual and the universal. If applied to notions of creativity, Agamben's event of language can be seen, by analogy, as a model of elaborating new means of addressing questions of originality in relation to established categories. An event of language is what Agamben sees as leading to an experience of potentiality of thought. Hence, I suggest, an event of language is a key tool of the Iterative turn as a space of potentiality and exploration of emergent creative paradigms.

discursive structure of the event. The absence of the event itself becomes particularly explicit when the script becomes text, read outside of the immediate context of the event. The temporal removal of the writing as opposed to speech determines any possibility of speaking of the event while laying bare the structure of its iteration.

This construal of an event as a linguistic being is significant here as a means of not only approaching *The Weather* but also for defining the nature of transcription as a creative form of writing. The evental exception that generates the arrival of linguistic being presupposes a 'process from which something new emerges,'[496] it is, according to Badiou, a creation of new possibilities. What transpires, is a characteristic trajectory where acts of invention prove intrinsically linked to the emergence of an event. Through an association of evental acts with acts of invention a relationship between the event of transcription and the ontology of writing today emerges, one that establishes acts of iteration as an event of invention of a contemporary poetic form. The emergence of such linguistic being, of an event of invention that iterative poetic acts today exemplify, like the inscription of the Iraq war into the New York weather forecast, becomes a source of a rapture, a Derridean, a wound in poetics. An event is a radical break from the norms that govern the situation. It disturbs as much as it invents and, hence, becomes synonymous with what has been described in Chapter 1 as a turn. The event that causes the rapture in the weather forecast is clearly associated with a state of the unexpected, it evades any possibility of prediction, it comes from the outside of the situation but, inevitably, shapes and influences it. But this singular event that defines *The Weather* is read and applied here as a metaphor, or, perhaps, a performance of a similar rapture, a parallel turn in poetics manifested in iterative approaches to writing, turning transcription into a state of poetic surprise, writing into an event of writing.

3.4. THE MAJOR EVENT: KENNETH GOLDSMITH, *SEVEN AMERICAN DEATHS AND DISASTERS*

While *The Weather* is illustrative the event as defined by and at the same time defining its situation, Goldsmith's most recent transcription project, *Seven American Deaths and Disasters* (2013), focuses on major events themselves. The volume is a collection of seven transcriptions of real-time radio and television reports of seven events recognised as pivotal moments in the recent history of The U.S. and includes the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and John Lennon; the

[496] Alain Badiou, quoted in Daniel Bensaïd, 'Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event', in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 95.

space shuttle Challenger disaster; the Columbine shootings; 9/11; and the death of Michael Jackson. The opening JFK transcription, for example, draws from Dallas KLIF station broadcast, from November 22, 1963. The section opens with information about film showings in the Dallas area, thanksgiving advice, and beer advertising, among others. Reminders about Kennedy's speech, 'billed as a major event,'[497] also feature, here exposed – similarly to the events announced on the pages of *Day* and *The Day* – as the future never to come. The initial report on Kennedy's shooting interrupts a pop song, which immediately resumes, following a promise of reports about the event, as they become available. The passage reads:

> […] (Boom)
> (Whoo-ee-whoo)
> He'll never make me cry
> (Boom-sh-boom)
> Every time we kiss goodnight
> Feels so good to hold him tight…
> This is KLIF bulletin from Dallas. Three shots reportedly were fired at the motorcade of President Kennedy today near the downtown section. KLIF news is checking out the report. We will have further reports. Stay tuned.
> …up in the sky
> (And someday I know) oh-oh, yeah
> (We'll walk down the aisle)[498]

Further reports are broadcast in a similar context, foregrounding the juxtaposition of the mundane and the major event:

> Hey, be sure that you stock up for this weekend with Texas-brewed premium Hamm's beer at popular Texas prices.
> And now we take you to KLIF Mobile Unit No. 4 in downtown Dallas. The latest information – and things are rather confused this moment – shots definitely were fired at the presidential motorcade as it passed through downtown Dallas. All squads are converging code three in the area of Elm and Houston in downtown. There is a tentative description of the shooting suspect. A man, a white male believed to be approximately thirty years old, reportedly armed with a thirty calibre rifle. How many shots were fired, how many persons, if any, were struck and wounded, we do not know yet. Very closed-mouthed officials are clamping down on the entire story. We'll bring you what details are available just as quickly as they come into our possession.
> Sandra Dee has her troubles. Listen. A lot's been said about the wild teenage thing. But wait till you see the scrapes my dad Jimmy Stewart gets into. Yikes! [499]

This passage is evocative of Mary Ann Doane's understanding of media as a 'catastrophe machine.' For Doane, the urgency to report a major event may disturb

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[497] Kenneth Goldsmith, *Seven American Deaths and Disasters* (Brooklyn, NY: Powerhouse Books, 2013), 9. Hereafter SAD.
[498] Ibid, 11.
[499] Ibid, 14-15.

the flow of pre-programmed information at any time. Such 'moments when information bristles,' writes Doane, 'link us briefly to the Real.'[500] Characteristically, the dynamic that Doane describes is evocative of the event as the unexpected. The opening passages of the JFK section of *Seven American Deaths* echo the evental model of *The Weather*. The news about the shooting emerges as an eponymous occurrence of the unforeseeable. The programme and the scheduled advertising continue as planned, but as more information becomes available, the balance shifts. The major event and the attempts to recount the disaster gradually take over the radio report, to conclude with the official news of Kennedy's death. This alteration of focus can be read as a transition from the situation to the event, turning the JFK section of *Seven American Deaths* into a textual transitional stage between the approach to transcribing the event in *The Weather* and in further sections of the *Disasters* book, where focus is placed on the decontextualised event itself.

The John F. Kennedy transcript is of particular significance to the volume. The assassination features as an event that marks a turning point in the North American history and politics but also as a defining moment in the history of the media, and included as such. As Goldsmith explains, 'the modern era of media spectacle begins with the John F. Kennedy assassination, hence [the] choice to start the book there.'[501] Like the opening JFK section, the subsequent six passages all iterate footage of heavily mediated events. Such conceptual framework brings to mind Baudrillard's discussion of the Gulf War. For Baudrillard, the 1991 conflict serves as an example of a new kind of an event and a new kind of power, which is, as Paul Patton describes it, 'at once both real and simulacral.'[502] As the first military operation with footage relayed live from the battlefront, the Gulf War exemplifies, as Baudrillard argues, a virtual war:

> war, when it has been turned into information, ceases to be a realistic war and becomes [...] the site of total uncertainty. We are left with the symptomatic reading on our screens of the effects of the war, of the effects of discourse about war.'[503]

Similarly, *Seven American Deaths* formulates a meditation on the uncertainties of fact and struggles to relay information about the unexpected. The possibilities of the real-time reporting as evoked in the seven tragedies appropriated by Goldsmith create an illusion of an immediate access to real events. But what they evoke instead are information events, events which replace the real and by means of such substitution

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[500] Mary Anne Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe', in Patricia Mellencamp (ed.), *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (London: BFI, 1990), 228.
[501] Kenneth Goldsmith, Afterword to SAD, 173.
[502] Paul Patton, Introduction to Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place*, trans. Paul Patton, (Sydney: Power Publications, 2000), 6
[503] Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place* (Sydney: Power Publications 2000), 41.

inform the public opinion, the collective memory and understanding of history and politics. Just like the war described by Baudrillard, Goldsmith's states of the unexpected evoke the dynamic of information production and circulation. Here, the Derridean impossibility of saying the event is echoed in the impossibility of the real-time. The real events cease to reflect the reality of the event but become virtual events as a highly mediated impression rather than the thing of the event. This approach is evocative of the iterative aesthetics of Feldman's *9:12* project. Here, it is the media that becomes, to turn to Baudrillard,

> the prerequisite to any [...] event. We need it precisely because the event escapes us [...] The obscene aphrodisiac function fulfilled by the decoy of the event, by the decoy of war. [...] We have neither need of nor taste for real drama or real war.[504]

But media considered as such also becomes a prerequisite framework to an emergence of iterative poetics.

This association of iteration in poetry with live media spectacle is predicated on mechanisms of information production and dissemination. As Jay David Bolter points out, in the contemporary media world the concept of real-time delivery proves instrumental in determining what is considered real or authentic in our culture; 'real-time is televisual "liveness" as refined by digital processing.'[505] However, as Bolter stresses, it is 'near-real-time' rather than 'real-time' dynamic that characterises contemporary modes of media production;

> We can see distant events almost as they happen, where the gap between the occurrence and our consumption of the images may be measured in seconds, minutes, or hours. In that gap, the communications system (both as a technology and as a cultural and economic force) 'processes' the signal: in other words, those in control of the technology both manufacture and constrain the spectacle for us. Sometimes a matter of seconds is enough to reshape the image. [506]

Seen as such, real time proves an illusion of the lived experience. Regardless of the technological advancements, certain removal and belatedness always marks and defines an act of speaking an event. And it is this temporal gap that opens space for creative acts implied in the process of a repetition of the event. To quote Derrida,

> when people pretend today to show us live what's happening, the event taking place in the Gulf War, we know that, as live and apparently immediate as the discourse and picture may be, [...] what is shown to us live is already, not saying or showing of the event but its production.[507]

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[504] Ibid, 75.
[505] Jay David Bolter, Preface to *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to reality TV and Beyond,* ed. Geoff King (Bristol and Portland, OR: Intellect Books, 2005), 9.
[506] Ibid, 10.
[507] ACIP, 447.

The repetition in Goldsmith's transcription, as a repetition of a repetition, characteristically foregrounds this persistence of the near-real time. The temporal removal that characterises an act of transcription, here repeating the mediated impression of the 1963 or 2001 disasters in a 2013 publication, conflates the immediacy of news and the historical nature of its archives. 'We think we know the story,' as Vanessa Place comments, 'but we only know the event in retrospect.'[508]

An engagement with time as a means of conceptualising the poetics of repetition surfaces particularly explicitly in the context of a distinction that can be drawn between an event and a major event, and the politics of mediation, preservation, and archivisation of both. Unlike *Day* – the news from a day when nothing happens – a transcription of news that loses currency almost immediately, those major events of *Seven American Deaths and Disasters* remain identifiable and significant today. Synonymous with the everyday, the events of *Day* lack the historical persistence of the major event. The currency and the preservation of an event that defined *The Day* in collective memory resides in its emergence as the unexpected. As an archive of contemporary history, the records of the JFK or RFK assassinations, or 9/11, read in 2013, are marked by a historical distance and a proximity of these events at the same time. This characteristic temporal framework inherent in the act of transcription of such archival material informs iteration as a poetic practice. The persistence of the major event, and, hence, the currency of news re-articulated as experimental poetry, can be considered a manifestation of Deleuze's understanding of event time. For Deleuze, a distinction can be drawn between the event itself and its actualisation in particular circumstances, an approach to thinking about the structure of the event reminiscent of Derrida's differentiation between the thing and an impression of an event. But for Deleuze, the nature of this dual logic of the event resides in the distinct temporal character of the event as contrasted with its actualisation, one manifested in a differentiation between the time of the event and the time of a historical event. I propose this taxonomy as a framework for thinking about transcription as a creative mode and a means of conceptualising instances of iteration as poetic acts.

Historical time ('Chronos'), as defined by Deleuze, is the time in which events occur. It is the chronological time of the archive and history; it evokes the finite, recorded chronology of the events of 9/11 or the Columbine shootings, only existing in the present, solely associated with the events as they are unveiling. The time of the event ('Aion'), on the other hand, cannot be reduced to historical time. For Deleuze,

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[508] Vanessa Place, 'What Makes Us', *The Constant Critic*, 14 August 2013, accessed 07 September 2013, http://www.constantcritic.com/vanessa_place/what-makes-us/.

it operates as 'no longer time that exists between two instants,' but a 'meanwhile,'[509] or, as Bennett describes it, 'a kind of between time with its own characteristics.'[510] As Tamsin Lorraine explains, in the time of Aion chronology is characteristically raptured and, as a result, 'all events are related to all other events.'[511] While Chronos relies on a linear conception of time, Aion is its rhizomatic counterpart. The time of the event, as understood by Deleuze, differs significantly from the historical time in which events occur in that it cannot assume the characteristic sequential evolution that marks the unveiling of the historical event. 'What history grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience,' while, for Deleuze and Guattari, 'the event, in its becoming, in its specific constituency, in its self-positioning as concept escapes History.'[512] What transpires are two approaches to thinking about the event. While an event determined by the chronology and finitude of Chronos assumes the status of history, as that of the archive, the temporal framework of Aion can be seen as a trigger instrumental in a conceptualisation of an event as an aesthetic project. The latter resides in an attempt to reassemble, or to adopt Deleuze's term, re-actualise and inhabit the event, always irrevocably embedded in its historical representation. As Bennett puts it,

> an aesthetic project, in this sense, offers more than a record, a flashback or reconstruction; it generates a means of inhabiting and simultaneously reconfiguring the historical event as a radically different experience.[513]

The temporal removal of the event from the historical event as determined by the structure of Aion, abstracts the event from the historical event. The temporal removal creates a new situation, a new condition under which a different, aesthetic actualisation of the event emerges. This is a dynamic echoing modern and contemporary art practices, as Bennett explains, typically identified as sites where 'reordering and transformation of condition of perception can occur.'[514] Seen as such, reframing and recontextualising news as poetry can be considered a new approach to the event it iterates. This is an attitude to thinking the event that resides not so much in the interest in the event itself – not in the news of 9/11 – but rather in its impression, the news recontextualised and reactualised as poetry. This distinction relies on the dual temporal logic of the event as described above. Illustrative of such

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[509] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 158.
[510] PA, 38.
[511] Tamsin Lorraine, 'Living a Time Out of Joint,' in Paul Patton and John Protevi (eds.), *Between Deleuze and Derrida* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 37.
[512] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy*, 110.
[513] PA, 40.
[514] Ibid, 44.

dynamics, the temporal logic that governs Goldsmith's acts of transcription isolates the iteration of 9/11 from 9/11 itself; *Seven American Deaths* is not simply a restorative project but a means of being in the event in a novel way, an aesthetic encounter with the event.

As an iteration of the event marked by a removal from the historical event that it repeats Goldsmith's act of transcription can be seen as a manifestation of an event in a constant state of becoming. For Deleuze, becoming is that which is never past, present, or future while it is also always a matter of simulacrum. It contends both a model and a copy at once, a dynamic characteristically echoed in Baudrillard's understanding of an event today, reformulated as a media spectacle. The event seen as such is defined by a temporality that places it outside of the chronology of past-present-future. While it exists as that which has already passed or is always just about to come, 'in a time out of time,'[515] the event itself, and when read within the framework, an act of transcription, remains, always in the state of becoming. The act of selection of the seven disasters that Goldsmith includes in the volume should be read, I suggest, as an act of subverting a chronology of the symbolic events, those lived in the past. The act of transcription establishes a new form of an impression of the event – of being in the event – it reactualises the text, to give rise to a new literary form. Drawing on the past, the event of writing is an event of becoming other, a process in which the nature of the text changes by virtue of both contextual and temporal shift inherent in the act of transcription itself. Conceptualised as such, a shift from the record of a historical event to its rearticulation as poetry, from Chronos to Aion, engenders change as a marker of the process of becoming. The event is that which repeats, but, as C. Colwell points out, 'repeats differentially.'[516] Approached as an event, an act of transcription, then, is a result of such mode of repetition. Where repetition of the same generates history, the differential repetition of the event in which iteration as a poetic act resides, transforms as a source of an aesthetic project and a marker of creativity.

The differential repetition becomes, I suggest, a mode of production of meaning that affords a shift in understanding of the event presented in language. An event as an aesthetic project relies on generating novel ways of being in the event; the iteration of news as poetry creates a condition under which new perceptions, associations, and, hence, new forms of subjectivity and writing are formulated. A transcription as an aesthetic encounter with a major event is an event of infinite

[515] Lorraine, 32.
[516] C. Colwell, 'Deleuze and Foucault: Series, Event, Genealogy', *Theory and Event,* 1.2 (1997), non pag.

iteration, eternally reproduced, repeated and replayed, as a Derridaen saying that 'always harbours the possibility of resaying.'[517] The temporal removal as a condition of acts of poetic iteration triggers an intersection of issues of history, the archive and preservation of the event in time, and, conversely, of the juxtaposition of personal and official experiences of history. These texts, then, are filled with drama and emotions, but their affective dimension is affirmed not only in the transcribed content itself, but in the responses and approaches to the event: 'We are defined by these tragedies – and more so by the spectacle emanating from them,' Goldsmith explains.

> For younger people, the Kennedys are cold, distant historical figures while Michael Jackson grabs all the heat. And vice versa for the older people, who tend to write Jackson off as a joke. As a result, the book - although based on objective public events - is read and strained through one's unique subjectivity.[518]

The curatorial choices to engage with these particular seven events are embedded in Goldsmith's relationship to their historical time that defines the nature of authorship in *Seven*.[519] The expression of authorial subjectivity is manifested through a compulsion to repeat a selection of very particular moments in history, a mechanism that also renders affect visible. The proliferation of now familiar scenes and images (albeit in textual form) converts iteration into an expression of affect itself, both registering and inducing affect or emotion at the same time.

Seen as such, iterative poetics turns, similarly to erasure poetry, into a form that, to turn to Bennett, 'mimics the behaviour of affect itself.'[520] A reader of Goldsmith's transcription turns into a spectator[521] rather than a witness of a media spectacle. Rather than revealing and documenting, transcription engaged with documentary poetics of major events posits an inquiry into the nature of aesthetic experimentation with the event, of a structure of emotional event, a mode of tracing 'relations of closeness and distance, shifting dynamics and orientation,'[522] or, in Lauren Berlant's words, 'it rethinks the sensing of history, and the historic.'[523] Transcription as a creative method embedded in the major event affords a para-historical approach to history, it enables what Bennett describes as a 'point-of-view

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[517] ACIP, 452.
[518] Goldsmith, 'You Take Your Love'.
[519] The notion of thinking about Goldsmith's model of authorship as curatorship rather than authorship traditionally understood will be explored in more detail in the final section of this chapter.
[520] PA, 188.
[521] I borrow the term from Isobel Armstrong. See: Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* (Oxford Blackwell, 2000).
[522] PA, 32.
[523] Lauren Berlant, 'Thinking about feeling historical', *Emotion, Space and Society* 1 (2008), 4.

of the affective engagements'[524] with the event. Through an association of affect with the Derridean impossibility of saying the major event so pervasive in Goldsmith's project, transcription as a mode of responding to and expressing both affords a means of arriving at a new intuition about how to live in what Berlant describes as a heterotopic now, 'a new ordinariness that requires a new realism.'[525] Such an aesthetic modelling of reality evokes a realism formulated by means of a compulsion to repeat, but repeat differentially: 'to be forced into thought this way is to begin to formulate the event of feeling historical in the present.'[526]

3.5. THE RETURN OF THE REAL: A REPETITION

As J. Crandall suggests, in the contemporary media-saturated age, 'reality of representation is substituted for the representation of reality. That is, authenticity arises less from the authenticity of reality per se than the authenticity of the means by which reality is portrayed.'[527] For Žižek, we are today bound by repetition as a means of confirming the real:

> When in the days after September 11 our gaze was transfixed by the images of the plane hitting one of the WTC towers, we were all forced to experience [...] the 'compulsion to repeat' [...] we wanted to see it again and again; the same shots were repeated ad nauseam. [...] It was when we watched the two WTC towers collapsing on the TV screen that it became possible to experience the falsity of 'reality TV' shows.[528]

This assertion is also echoed in the 'World Trade Centre' section of *Seven American Deaths*, evocative of the iterative aesthetics of Feldman's *9:12* project. The WTC transcription assumes repetition – a governing mode of media spectacle – as its aesthetic dominant. Unlike the iteration of the JFK media coverage, appropriated in its entirety from the KLIF Dallas radio, the WTC transcript draws from several sources to construct the record of the 9/11 disaster, opening with an initial CNN television report, followed by radio station coverage from a range of New York stations. Collated, the WTC section of Goldsmith's volume is in itself evocative of the relational dynamics of the event, manifested in the twofold manner. Here, Goldsmith's personal relationship to the events of 9/11 is inscribed into the act of transcription. At the same time, the relationship of each individual media event to

[524] PA, 32
[525] Berlant, 6.
[526] Ibid, 5.
[527] J. Crandall, 'Unmanned: Embedded Reporters, Predator Drones and Armed Perception', *CTHEORY*, 4 September 2003, accessed 2 December 2011, www.ctheory.net.
[528] Slavoy Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 11-12.

further media events recording 9/11 form a singular narrative of 9/11 as composed by Goldsmith.

The coverage from 9/11 proves illustrative of the impossibility of saying the event and the struggle to report the disaster as it is unveiling. Saturated with images (spoken of, not reprinted in the volume) and eyewitness reports, the WTC transcription highlights the broadcaster's uncertainty as to the events they attempt to report:

> Yeah. Oh! Oh my gosh. The entire building … it looks like the side of the building has collapsed. Oh my gosh, this is horrific, absolutely horrific. How could that have happened? How could that have happened unless there was some sort of secondary explosion within those planes? Now this, uk, Ed, was the World Trade Center Two. Oh my gosh! This is … this is absolutely …
> Uh, Joe, we can't…I can't tell from my perspective, eh … exactly what's … what's happened here … how much of the building is still standing.
> But … but … but … but … Ed … but Ed … it looks like the side portion of that has totally fallen and there is just a huge cloud of dust that is encompassing several city blocks. Oh God … eh … eh … […] I am trying to look … Can you see? Is that building still there? […]
> The. South. Tower. Has. Collapsed. […] Ugh! Oh! I mean that's … that's … that's … That would … that would … that would … And you have to wonder how … Let's just think about this logically. There is no logic.[529]

The availability of the real-time footage, most explicit in the 9/11 transcript, offers means of interrogating the possibilities and limitations of expression in the face of a disaster. It embodies the mode of exploring the certain impossible possibility of speaking the unexpected. Goldsmith's interest in the language of real-time reporting resides in the preoccupation with the language of Currie's open future, or of the Derridean future to come. Derrida, in fact, distinguishes between the predictable future and the future that actually comes, the future as *l'avenir* and the future as *l'arrivant*. As Goldsmith noted, broadcasts depicting the assassinations of, for example, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X are available, but no media were present as the shootings took place; 'by the time the reporters arrived on the scenes, the language was more flatly characteristic of standard reportage: confidently and deftly delivered,'[530] reporting the future as *l'arrivant*. In contrast, the real-time reports offer an insight into the linguistic nature of the unexpected, an exercise in the (im)possibility of engaging with the future as *l'avenir*, and the thing of the event, 'highlighting,' Goldsmith explains, 'the broadcasters' uncertainty as to what they were actually depicting.'[531] The only certainty expressed in the transcribed coverage is that

[529] SAD, 138-40.
[530] Goldsmith, Afterword, 174.
[531] Ibid.

'something relatively devastating has happened.'[532] Speculations abound, reports from eyewitnesses are interrupted by signal failures, the broken, repetitive discourse of reporting evokes the struggle to comprehend and speak of the events taking place. 'It is,' as *Seven American Deaths* reads, 'a situation beyond description. [...] There's almost no textbook for any of us here on the radio to figure out just what to say. There are no words at all to express this.'[533] The struggle to represent the event is evocative of Derrida's understanding of the discursive structure of the major event. Commenting on 9/11, Derrida talks about it as the unprecedented event, as a 'something' that took place:

> we perhaps have no concept and no meaning available to us to name in any other way this 'thing' that has just happened, this supposed 'event'. [...] we have the feeling of not having seen it coming [...] we do not yet know how to qualify, [...] we do not know what we are talking about.[534]

This is an event that comes and, to quote Derrida, 'in coming, comes to surprise [...], to surprise and to suspend comprehension: the event is first of all *that which* I do not first of all comprehend.'[535] This is a disaster as being that, in Blanchot's words, 'escapes the very possibility of experience – it is the limit of writing [...] the disaster [that] de-scribes.'[536]

The eyewitness report plays a significant role here, illustrative of the changing nature of postproduction news media reporting. The stutters, the uncertainties as expressed at the limit of language, take centre stage in the 9/11 coverage, characterised by fragmented speech, significantly more hesitant and often much more inarticulate than in the case of earlier events transcribed. While the JFK assassination coverage derives from police reports and radio journalism, the 9/11 reporting collates eyewitness reports, mobile phone images, amateur footage, alongside professional reporting and official statements from New York authorities. Illustrative of this framework, the (almost) real-time report on the explosions in the WTC towers derives from, among others, an eyewitness account reporting on the disaster spectacle unveiling in front of her apartment window:

> We want to go to an eyewitness on the telephone right now.
> Jeanne, what can you tell us what you saw? [...] Now, can you see if here is a lot of debris downstairs, Jeanne?
> No, because it looks like it's inverted. With the impact everything went inside the building.

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[532] SAD, 127.
[533] Ibid, 144, 141.
[534] ARSS, 86.
[535] Ibid, 90.
[536] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 7.

> Inside?
> The only thing that came out was a little bit of the outside awning. But I'd say the huge … the hole is … Let me just get a better look right now …
> OK, go ahead.
> I'd say the hole takes about … it looks like six or seven floors were taken out.
> And there's more explosions right now! Hold on! People are running up the street! […] All right, Jeanne, you know, let me put Jeanne on hold for just a moment.
> OK. How much longer are we staying on? I'm inside of a diner right now.
> Well, Jeanne, you know what, if you could give us a call back … I just … Don't panic here on air.[537]

This passage is particularly indicative of the contemporary modes of production of media content. As Lee Rodney points out:

> The prevalence of 'amateur' video footage in much of what now stands for 9/11 certainly influenced how the invasion of Iraq was subsequently presented in 2003. The emphasis on 'real life' confusion as conveyed in the jerky, vertiginous sequences, dirty lenses and hysterical commentary that came through in the camcorder tapes of the World Trade Center collapse gave new life to the old form of the eye-witness account.[538]

Hence*, Seven American* presents an archive of both the events themselves and of the modes of media production and reporting – as they have developed from 1963 to 2009 – that also evokes the historical developments in technologies of reproduction and related possibilities of iteration. Goldsmith's transcript serves as a poignant commentary on the contemporary society, saturated with perpetual replays of media content, often turning tragic events into tainted clichés. Through textual repetitions of mediated impressions of those major events, *Deaths and Disasters* echoes the dynamics of media production, itself inherently reliant on acts of iteration as a mode of reporting. 'All that we can hope for is […],' Baudrillard argues, 'that some event or other should overwhelm the information instead of the information inventing the event and commenting artificially upon it.'[539] Where the news rather than the event itself, the impression rather the thing, assumes the function of the event, the dynamic of iteration, and its aesthetic and poetic manifestations, gain particular currency.

Such focus on the discourse of mediated event offers possibilities of interrogating the struggle to find words to express the horrors and the resulting trauma witnessed in all seven cases appropriated by Goldsmith. It is 'smooth speech

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[537] SAD, 135-136.
[538] Lee Rodney, 'Real Time, Catastrophe, Spectacle: Reality as Fantasy in Live Media', in *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*, ed. Geoff King (Bristol: Intelect, 2005), 39.
[539] Baudrillard, 48.

turned to stutter laced with doubt and fear.'[540] Similar inability to find language to speak of a traumatic event that manifests itself in erasure poetry comes to the fore in the context of transcription poetics of major event. The form accentuates the discursive failures, while the remediation from spoken to written discourse makes the stutters particularly visible. But if a failure to speak in erasure writing epitomises an alternative mode of witnessing, a transcription of the major event punctuated by linguistic struggles can be read as a form of traumatic realism, to adopt Hal Foster's term. Foster's traumatic realism is an aesthetic category developed as a means of describing a relationship between the real and neo-avant-garde artistic practice.[541] For Foster, the trauma of modern existence results in what he describes as the return of the real in aesthetics. Echoes of the documentary turn, as discussed with reference to erasure poetics, reverberate in Foster's interest in the present; in 'what produces a present as different.' [542] Characteristically, Foster associates the contemporary experience of the real – this traumatic realism – with a propensity for repetition inherent in contemporary art. 'In postwar art,' Foster explains, 'to pose the question of repetition is to pose the question of the neo-avant-garde.'[543] This trajectory is manifested particularly explicitly in Pop Art and Foster focuses on Warhol's *Death in America* images from the early 1960 as illustrative of the notion of traumatic realism.

Collated for Warhol's show in Paris in 1964, *Death in America* images included silkscreens of appropriated photographs, sourced from magazines, tabloids, and archives. The collection included, 'the electric chair pictures and the dogs in Birmingham and car wrecks and some suicide pictures'[544] [Figure 40]. It is a series of images documenting instances of death, reprinted, driven by and at the same time embodying acts of compulsive repetition so characteristic in Warhol's art. For Foster, *Death in America* images are neither simply referential nor simulacral, affective nor affectless, critical nor complacent, rather they simultaneously encompass the simulacrum and the reference, affect and its lack – an approach to thinking about Warhol's acts of repetition that is consolidated in the notion of traumatic realism. Foster associates Warhol's commitment to mechanical reproduction ('I want to be a

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[540] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Proudly Fraudulent', an interview by Mark Allen, *The Awl*, 6 February 2013, accessed 26 February 2014, http://www.theawl.com/2013/02/an-interview-with-avant-garde-poet-kenneth-goldsmith.
[541] The affinities of iterative writing with neo-avant-gardes are explored later in this chapter.
[542] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), xiii.
[543] Ibid, 1.
[544] Andy Warhol, '"What is Pop Art?" Answers from 8 Painters, Part I', interview by Gene Swenson, *ARTnews* November 1963, in *I'll be your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith (New York: Carroll and Graff, 2004), 18.

machine'), [545] with his subjectivity. What is of paramount importance to Foster's approach to Warhol, and of particular significance in the context of reading transcription as an affective, expressive genre, is his rejection of the propensity to draw correlations between art in the age of mechanical reproduction and inherent blankness, complacency and commodification of both artists and art. Instead, Foster argues, the commitment to a form of eternally reproduced, mediated reality that Warhol's art exhibits 'may point less to a blank subject than to a shocked one, who takes on the nature of what shocks him as a mimetic defence against this shock.'[546] Foster reads Warhol's repetition in Lacanian terms to identify acts of repetition of trauma as the missed encounters with the real. 'As missed,' Foster points out, 'the real cannot be represented; it can only be repeated.'[547] But, as Foster, via Lacan, explains, the German notion of *Wiederholen* is not synonymous with *Reproduzieren*; repetition is not tantamount to reproduction.

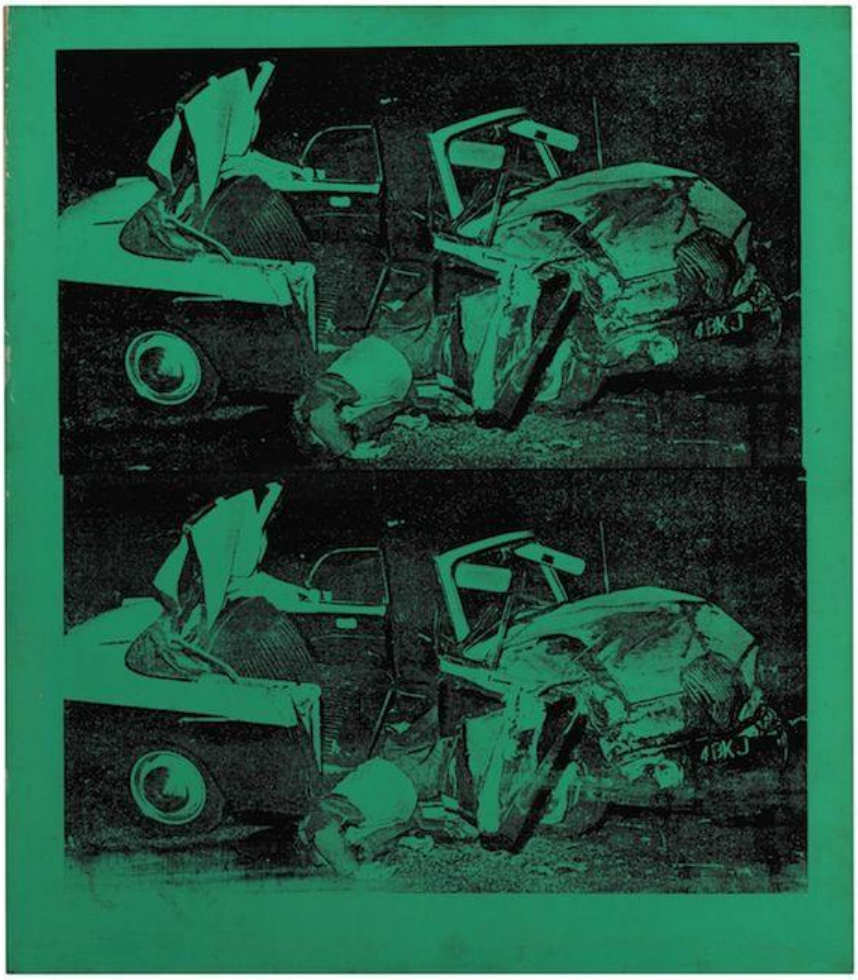

FIGURE 40: ANDY WARHOL, *GREEN DISASTER (GREEN DISASTER TWICE)* (1963)

[545] Ibid, 18.
[546] Hal Foster, 'Death in America', *October*, 75 (1996), 39-41.
[547] Ibid, 42.

This is a dynamic that, I suggest, also defines Goldsmith's iterative textuality. The experience of reality in *Seven American Deaths* is that of a repeated reality, repeated and not reproduced. Reproduction would imply a repetition of the same, while Goldsmith's transcription relies on acts of differential repetition. Foster's Lacanian notion of repetition is important here as a framework for reading transcription as inherently creative. If an act of transcription is conceptualised as an event of writing, as that which repeats an event and triggers a textual event at the same time, then Goldsmith's approach echoes the model described by Foster: 'the repetitions not only *re*produce traumatic effects; they *produce* them as well.'[548] They function not only as repetitions of the emotions and struggles as expressed and recorded by, for example, the radio broadcast of 9/11 eyewitness reports, but generate a new set of emotions, an affective response to someone else's trauma:

> in these repetitions [...] several contradictory things occur at the same time; a warding away of traumatic significance and an opening out to it, a defending against traumatic affect *and* a producing of it.[549]

What transpires is an alternative means of dealing with the trauma of disasters in contemporary history and a way of speaking of them similar to Holmes's erasure writing. Echoes of Derrida's notion of a traumatic event reverberate here. For Derrida, the traumatism inherent in the experience of the major event,

> comes from the possibility to come of the worst, from the repetition to come – through worse. Traumatism is produced by the *future*, by the *to come*, by the threat of the worst *to come*, rather than by an aggression that is 'over and done with.[550]

This is a trajectory that Goldsmith and Warhol both rehearse in their respective *Death* series. The repetitiveness of the events created through textual and visual appropriation of major disasters lock the memories of what is repeated into an infinite cycle of iteration, foregrounding their iterability as well as the repetitive nature of history, a reminder of a repetitions to come, of prospective major events.

Through the process of constant repetition seen as such a new form of realism is produced, formulated at a cross-section of the new realism to which Berlant refers and the New Realism as understood by Gerald Malanga;[551] the new realism as

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[548] Ibid, 42.
[549] Ibid.
[550] ARSS, 97.
[551] As Reva Wolf explains, for Malanga – Warhol's long term assistant – New Realism 'came to stand for a way of creating art – and of living – that paralleled Warhol's practice and raised compelling questions about copying (or "stealing") words and images, about authorship and about identity' [Reva Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 81]. Malanga's New Realism is typically associated with a reading Malanga gave in 1964 in Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, which was holding an exhibit of Warhol's work. Malanga's New Realism project was an attempt at

traumatic realism. Similarly, as Goldsmith notes, the mode of uncreative writing offers what he describes as a poetic of realism, 'reminiscent of the documentary impulse behind Zola's Les Rougon-Macquart series.' Inspired by Zola, Goldsmith argues, 'the new writing is a realism beyond realism: it's hyperrealist – a literary photorealism.' [552] This association brings to mind the aesthetics of the Pictures Generation and photography's propensity to appropriate that characterised aesthetic developments in the 1970s, as exemplified by Prince and Levine and discussed later in this chapter. But it is important to point out that the structure of repetition conceptualised as a means of reflecting the real in contemporary experimental poetics does not always manifest itself by means of traumatic realism. The notion of traumatic realism offers a pertinent framework for conceptualising the nature of repetition in *Seven American Deaths* but, characteristically, two distinct qualities of realism emerge in both Warhol's and Goldsmith's work. As Charles F. Stuckey observed, the great majority of Warhol's paintings, beginning in 1962, are literal representations of everyday objects. Stuckey positions Warhol's works such as the *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962) in the line of Duchamp ready-made tradition, [553] embedded in the reality of the everyday object, of the mundane and the familiar. The affinities between Goldsmith's and Warhol's art echo the Duchamp-Warhol association. Similarly to Warhol's *Campbell Soup*, there is a clear correlation between Goldsmith's *Day* and the ready-made tradition, representative of the realism of the everyday. In contrast, *The Day* and *Seven American Deaths* are characterised by the aesthetics of traumatic realism as defined by Foster. Both approaches, however, are driven by and contingent on a propensity to repeat.

3.6. DEATH AND DISASTERS: A REPETITION

Foster's interest in Warhol's work is significant when considered in the context of Goldsmith's *Seven American Deaths*. The *Death in America* exhibit discussed by Foster brought together a selection of Warhol's *Death and Disasters* series images, directly referenced by Goldsmith in his volume. *Seven American*

involving poetry in Warhol's *Disaster* series (and anticipating Goldsmith's *Seven America Deaths* project). A flyer for Malanga's reading read: 'Poem Visuals by Andy Warhol and Gerald Malanga/ The New Realism, Yeah, yeah, Fashion and Disaster series read by Gerald Malanga' [Poem Visuals: Invitation to Andy Warhol and Gerald Malanga poetry, 1964, David Burdon Papers, *Archives of American Art*, *Smithsonian Institution*, accessed 15 September 2014, http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/images/detail/poem-visuals-invitation-to-andy-warhol-and-gerard-malanga-poetry-8247].

[552] UW, 100 - 01.

[553] Charles F. Stuckey, 'Warhol in Context', in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Gary Garrels (Bay Press: Seattle, 1989), 7.

Deaths and Disasters draws on Warhol's *Death and Disasters* to repeat Warhol's acts of repetition, by textual means. The affinities between Goldsmith and Warhol are key, I suggest, to understanding Goldsmith's iterative practice, both in *Seven American Deaths* and more broadly.[554] Goldsmith sees Warhol as 'the single most important figure for uncreative writing.'[555] For Goldsmith,

> Andy Warhol was an unoriginal genius, one who was able to create a profoundly original body of work by isolating, reframing, recycling, regurgitating, and endlessly reproducing ideas and images that weren't his, yet by the time he was finished with them, they were completely Warholian.[556]

The same concerns and interests pervade Goldsmith's thinking about the possibility of iteration as a creative act. The propensity to repeat but not reproduce for Goldsmith is a complete project, expressed in his individual works as well as in the manner in which the Warhol gesture is evoked. The aesthetic preoccupation with the newspaper in both Goldsmith and Warhol exemplifies this trajectory. Goldsmith draws on news in the same way Warhol did. Both also show the same penchant for New York sources. Goldsmith's act of repeating the complete issue of a newspaper in *Day*, for example, is a clear nod in Warhol's direction and works such as his *A Boy for Meg* (1962) [Figure 41] or *129 Die in a Jet* (1962) [Figure 42] both come to mind in the context.[557]

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554 The Warhol reference is pervasive in Goldsmith's critical and creative work. In an interview with Caroline Bergvall Goldsmith names Warhol as the person he would like to be if he was not himself [Caroline Bergvall, 'Stepping out with Kenneth Goldsmith: A New York Interview', *Open Letter*, 12.7 (2005), 98]. In 2004 Goldsmith edited a collection of Warhol interviews, *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*.

555 UW, 139.

556 Ibid.

557 Both works are paintings in which front pages of New York newspapers are reproduced. Goldsmith's projects, such as *Day*, evoke this readymade approach to engaging with newspapers.

FIGURE 41: ANDY WARHOL, *A BOY FOR MEG* (1962)

FIGURE 42: ANDY WARHOL, *129 DIE IN A JET* (1962)

According to Simon Watney Warhol represents a new type of an artist engaged in a new type of artistic practice that requires a reconceptualisation of the life-art relationship. For Watney, the so called 'Warhol effect' invalidates 'the criteria of

predetermined models of artistic value.'[558] Read as a literary counterpart to Warhol, Goldsmith stands for a new type of a writer. As such, the 'value' of transcription as poetry is not inferred from the text's originality. It is the notion of originality that requires a reconceptualisation in the context, to reflect similar developments in appropriation art. To borrow from Kosuth, writing about the value of conceptual art in 1969, 'the "value" of particular artists after Duchamp can be weighted according to how much they questioned the nature of art.'[559] Goldsmith's transcriptions echo the appropriation practices in literature to create 'new propositions.'[560] But engaging in similar iterative acts today, after Warhol, requires new ways of deploying repetition. What Goldsmith repeats is not just the specific source text, but also the method of appropriation itself. This contemporary iterative poetics surfaces as an acknowledgement of the singularity of the current cultural moment that resides in a re-appropriation of an appropriation gesture, in a repetition of a repetition, to arrive at a novel, current aesthetic mode.

If, as Arthur Danto argues, Warhol's art is to be read as a symptom of his media-oriented, hyper-consumerist culture at a unique historical moment,[561] then Goldsmith's writing, by analogy, should be considered as a manifestation of the current postproduction condition of excessive information production. Warhol, in 1963 declared: 'I want to be a machine.'[562] Echoing Warhol, Goldsmith today shows the same propensity for automated authorship. If Warhol was a machine, producing machine art in the era of the photocopier, typewriter, tape recorder, and early computation, then Goldsmith should be seen as a digital machine, 'a word processor' ('I used to be an artist; then I became a poet; then a writer. Now when asked, I simply refer to myself as a word processor'),[563] creating literature by means of digital reproduction. The compulsive use of things in Warhol turns into a preoccupation with information in Goldsmith's case, both answering to cultural moments of excess. This shift echoes the transition from a postmodern to a postproduction moment as discussed in Chapter 1, evoked in a move away from Warhol's art-factory and towards Goldsmith's desktop computer, from a silkscreen print station or a typewriter to a

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[558] Simon Watney, 'The Warhol Effect', in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Gary Garrels (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 122.
[559] Joseph Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 164.
[560] Ibid.
[561] Arthur Danto, 'Warhol and the Politics of Prints', in *Andy Warhol Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné 1962-1987*, Frayda Feldman and Jörg Schellmann (New York: Edition Schellmann, 1997), 15.
[562] Warhol, 'What is Pop Art?', 18.
[563] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'I look to theory…', *Electronic Poetry Center*, accessed 19 August 2014, http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/goldsmith/theory.html.

networked computer. Goldsmith's and Warhol's reproducibility alike assumes technological advancements as a trigger for the development of the aesthetics of iteration. But while Warhol might have anticipated the possibilities of technologies to come, Goldsmith is realising that vision.

For Warhol, 'everything repeats itself.' 'It is amazing,' Warhol commented in 1997, 'that everyone thinks that everything is new, but it's all repeat.'[564] Warhol's idea of creativity is antithetical to established notions of originality. He shows no interest in creating anything new: 'Why should I be original? Why can't I be nonoriginal?,' 'I just like to see things used and reused,' Warhol declared in 1963. 'I'm antismudge. It's too human. I am for mechanical art [...] If somebody faked my art, I couldn't identify it.'[565] Both statements are key, I suggest, to defining Warhol's (and through Warhol, Goldsmith's) approach to the aesthetics of iteration as a differential repetition. The overt commitment to copying in both Warhol's and Goldsmith's work is a manifestation of the impossibility of repetition of the same. Difference characterises Warhol's compulsively repetitive art, both in his propensity to repeat often familiar images and in his use of repetition as a defining structure of his serial images.

Warhol's commitment to mechanical reproduction operates, I suggest, as a manifestation of technological imperfections. In his work, Warhol frequently relied on a silkscreen printing method. Screen printing is a technique which requires a use of a stencil to apply ink onto a substrate to transfer an image onto a desired surface. As Jennifer Dyer explains, silkscreening is a method that, when applied correctly, allows for maximum precision in repeated images. Warhol's approach, however, seems grounded in a commitment to repetition of difference rather than sameness, in an attempt to subvert the dynamics of mechanical reproduction, by provoking accidents and alterations, and seeking out imperfect copies. 'Warhol's medium is often stroked across the image unevenly,' Dyer explains, 'or the squeegee is not cleaned between applications, resulting in varying densities and streaks in the colour.'[566] There are issues with colour and sharpness, again, a result of incorrect execution, or instances of images completed by hand, as a consequence of medium insufficient to complete a stroke. Commenting on the technologies employed, Warhol himself noted the impossibility of arriving at identical copies: 'I've had to resort to silk

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564 Andy Warhol, 'Andy Warhol Interviewed by K.H.', in *The Warhol Look: Glamour Style Fashion*, eds. Mark Francis and Margery King (Pittsburgh, PA: Bullfinch Press and The Andy Warhol Museum, 1997), 273.
565 Andy Warhol, 'Warhol interviews Bourdon', an interview by David Bourdon, in *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews,* ed. Kenneth Goldsmith (New York: Carroll and Graff, 2004), 7, 9.
566 Jennifer Dyer, *Serial Images: The Modern Art of Iteration* (Zürich and Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), 112.

screens, stencils, and other kinds of automatic reproduction. And still the human element creeps in!'[567] To quote Dyer, 'with Warhol, the silkscreened print becomes as arbitrary, random and unpredictable as paint was for the abstract expressionists before him.'[568]

Silkscreening, similarly to transcription in Goldsmith's case, is a method that invites error. What Warhol created using the technique were almost-exact copies, rather than faithful duplicates of the reproduced originals, reconceptualising, as Dyer described the process, the 'activity of actualisation as the activity of differentiation.'[569] The mistakes that mark Warhol's attempts at reproduction – at making things the same – simultaneously make them different, in a process of repetition and not of reproduction. Thierry De Duve argues that the structure of Warhol's repetition manifests Warhol's attempt at subverting the power of mechanical reproduction. These technologies turn into tools that destabilise the message – the text or the image – reproduced by technological means. It is the standardisation through technology that here turns into, as Paul Benzon puts it, 'a destabilizing aesthetic and cultural force.'[570] Warhol, according to De Duve, 'knew how to exploit the imperfections of the photo-silkscreen.' [571] Warhol's accidents are both incidental and intentional. The mistakes in application of the technology define the creative method, they become a marker of Warhol's subjectivity, a punctum, perhaps, of the reproduced image. Each difference created by such misuse of technology is unique and unprecedented, always unexpected, never determined in advance. The alterations and imperfections characterising each iteration of the original mark the fallibility of the artist as a reproduction machine. As traces of the unpredictability and impossibility of repetition those differences constitute an act of repetition, be it of an image or a text, as an event itself – an act of transcription as an event of writing.

The structure of differential repetition in Warhol's images becomes synonymous with an act of creation. Similarly, inconsistencies and alterations that mark Goldsmith's transcriptions are a manifestation of the writing process itself. If, as Deleuze argues, 'the repetition of difference is that which 'unfolds as pure movement' [572] then it can be argued that repetition, and hence a possibility of iteration, relies on, first, a repetition of the process of creating the thing it repeated

[567] Warhol, 'Warhol interviews Burdon', 8.
[568] Dyer, 112.
[569] Ibid, 17
[570] Paul Benzon, 'Lost in Transcription: Postwar Typewriting Culture, Andy Warhol's Bad Book, and the Standardization of Error,' *PMLA* 125.1 (2010), 93.
[571] Thierry De Duve, 'Andy Warhol, or the Machine Perfected', trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October* 30 (1984), 12.
[572] Deleuze, *Difference,* 27.

and only then of the thing itself. Seen as such, an act of silkscreen printing and an act of transcription both perform dual acts of iteration; an act of transcription is a repetition of the original creative gesture that subsequently enables and generates a related repetition of a textual object.

This approach to iteration as a complex structure of repetition is important here and informs, I suggest, Goldsmith's complete creative project. Goldsmith's practice can be considered an attempt at turning into Andy Warhol for poetry.[573] Self-fashioning in a tradition of earlier avant-gardes constitutes Goldsmith's new avant-garde project. Characteristically, Warhol's attitudes to creativity also manifest themselves clearly in his artistic persona. Garry Garrels points out that 'the phenomenon of Warhol cannot be disengaged from the works he made.' [574] Christopher Schmidt also stresses a distinct performative dimension to Warhol's career, explicitly expressed in his persona as a strategy and 'an extension of the Warhol publicity machine.' [575] I would like to suggest that a similar dynamic characterises Goldsmith's artistic attitude. To quote Silliman, 'Kenny Goldsmith's actual art project is the project of Kenny Goldsmith.'[576] Goldsmith's performance is driven by acts of repetition. It is a repetition of Warhol's performance, openly constructed as such, recycled and reappropriated to fit the contemporary postproduction frame, an attitude particularly fit for the Iterative turn. Everything about Goldsmith is marked by acts of repetition. His is a complete iterative project; his texts repeat other texts, his method, hyperbolically iterative, is an iteration of earlier, related practices, his artistic manifestos are formulated as appropriations of his precursor's statements of avant-garde art, as if repeating Warhol's dictum on the persistence of repetition by means of acts of repetition. As such, both Goldsmith's attitudes and forms are a manifestation of an overtly iterative thinking, infinitely performing the aesthetic theory he postulates. His art becomes, to paraphrase Kosuth, a definition of art.[577]

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[573] This is implied in Goldsmith's *Uncreative Writing*. In his description of the state of contemporary literature Goldsmith cites Lev Grossman arguing for an exigency of pop, or a similar project, for literature. 'What poetry really needs,' Grossman suggests, is a writer who can do for it what Andy Warhol did for avant-garde visual art: make it sexy and cool and accessibly without making it stupid and patronising. When that writer arrives, cultural change will come swiftly, and relatively effortlessly [Lev Grossman, 'Poems for the People', quoted in UW, 93].

[574] Gary Garrels, Introduction to *The Work of Andy Warhol* (Bay Press: Seattle, 1989), ix.

[575] Christopher Schmidt, 'From A to B and Back Again: Warhol, Recycling, Writing', *Interval(le)s*, ii.2-iii.1 (2008/2009), 795.

[576] Ron Silliman, blog entry, 27 February 2006, accessed 28 July 2013, http://ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/2006/02/what-does-it-mean-for-work-of-art-to.html.

[577] Kosuth, 'Art', 170. This is an approach evocative of the premise of the Art & Language movement of the late 1960s. Writing for the first issue of *Art-Language* Terry Atkinson asked: 'can this editorial, in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what "conceptual

Goldsmith's identity as a postproduction reproduction machine is marked by differential acts of repetition. He repeats not reproduces, repeats differentially, the acts and texts of earlier avant-gardes in the contemporary digital moment, and actualises acts of photocopying (a manifestation of photocopying technology and copying of photos at the same time) as acts of digi-copying to interrogate the repercussion for aesthetics and poetics of the technological shift that enables and encourages the emergence of the Iterative turn. Thinking about Goldsmith in relation to earlier avant-gardes is particularly useful here. Characteristically, Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984), distinguishes between what he refers to as 'historic avant-garde movements,' such as DADA, constructivism, or surrealism, and 'all those neo-avantgardiste attempts that are characteristic for Western Europe and the United States during the fifties and sixties.'[578] The original avant-garde project, as defined by Bürger, centred on attempts to criticise modernist thinking and the notion of the autonomy of art to abolish the separation of the aesthetic from the real. By means of its new realist aesthetics Warhol's neo-avant-garde project stages, in Bürger's words, 'for a second time the avant-gardiste break with tradition.' [579] Goldsmith's writing, by analogy, can be said to enact the same process for the third time, to emerge as a neo-neo-avant-garde, with each avant-garde moment marked by, I suggest, a technological turn that defines it. Bürger rejects the neo-avant-garde project as derivative of and antithetical to 'genuinely avant-garde intentions,'[580] with avant-gardes considered original and neo-avant-gardes erring on the side of imitation and repetition. Implied in this statement, Buchloh notes, is a highly problematic notion of the 'loss of original for the present.'[581] For Buchloh, such positioning of what he describes as 'a moment of historical originality' as grounded in the disparate avant-garde movements is inadequate and reductionist; 'we are confronted here with practices of repetition that cannot be discussed in terms of influence, imitation, and authenticity alone.'[582]

Assuming Bürger's model that conceptualises neo-avant-garde practices as a repetition of the earlier avant-gardes, a trajectory can be drawn between the avant-

art" is, come up for the count as a work of conceptual art?' [Editors of Art-Language, Introduction to *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art*, 1.1 (1969), in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 100]. The same preoccupations about the possibilities of writing conceptual literature seem to reverberate in Goldsmith's work.

[578] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 109, n. 4. Hereafter TAG.

[579] Ibid, 61.

[580] Ibid, 60.

[581] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'The Primary Colours for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition for the Second Time', *October*, 37 (1986), 42.

[582] Ibid, 43.

garde, neo-avant-garde, and the contemporary neo-neo-avant-garde incarnations. While adopting Bürger's trajectory as a framework for explicating the status and nature of contemporary iterative poetics, my argument is positioned in line with Buchloh's critique of Bürger. I argue that this historical trajectory has to be taken into account in an attempt to define the neo-neo-avant-garde's originality as iteration. Following Buchloh, 'I want to ask whether it might not be precisely the process of repetition which constitutes the specific historical 'meaning' and 'authenticity' of the art [and poetic] production of the [neo]-neo-avant-garde.'[583] Seen as such, repetition so characteristic for the neo-neo-avant-garde practice, described here as iterative poetics, is presented as not just a creative method but a defining feature of iterative thinking itself. A strategy of repetition that iterative poetic acts assume can be described, then, as a paradigm itself; as a repetition of the paradigms of the previous avant-gardes and a repetition as a paradigm of the contemporary avant-garde practice simultaneously. Assuming Bürger's model, Goldsmith's neo-neo-avant-garde project is defined by a dynamic of a repetition of a repetition, through an engagement with the neo-avant-garde, twice removed from the 'historical avant-garde,' the original source it repeats.[584] As such, the originality of the neo-neo-avant-garde can only be conceptualised as repetition.[585] It relies on a departure from the binary differentiation between the copy and the original – between the fraudulent and the genuine – so ingrained in familiar notions of auratic originality and Romantic conceptions of authorship – to replace them with iteration as a creative alternative.

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[583] Ibid, 43.

[584] This is a model that, in an interesting way, evokes the structure the evental iteration discussed earlier; never a repetition of the event itself, of the thing, but rather of the impression, not of 9/11, but of the news of 9/11, always a repetition of a repetition. The logic of the neo-neo-avant-garde defined as such is synonymous with the logic of the Iterative turn. The propensity to repeat earlier iterative acts and attitudes rather than repeat an original is proposed here as a defining characteristic of contemporary iterative thinking. It finds its manifestation in a range of iterative works that engage with this structure of repetition that is inherently contemporary. Doeringer's 60 Years *Later*, an iteration of two works of appropriation, as discussed in Chapter 1, is only one of many examples. Further works include Kent Johnson's *Day* (2010) and Joe Hale's *Getting Inside Simon Morris's Head* (2014). Johnson's work is an exact copy of Goldsmith's *Day*, repurposed using a set of stickers to erase and replace Goldsmith's name on the cover, sold as *Day* by Kent Johnson for $30, with copies signed by Johnson available for $300 (Goldsmith's *Day* was marketed for $20). Hale's project is a retyping of Morris's *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head*. It is an iteration of Morris's text and of his original gesture. Like Morris's, Hale's text was originally published on a blog, as a retyping of Morris's retyping of Kerouac's, a page at the time. It was subsequently republished in a paperback, by IAM, Morris's publisher, in a volume designed to look just like Morris's, designed to look just like Kerouac's. In Hale's piece, all references to Kerouac are replaced with references to Morris, even Goldsmith's Introduction to Morris's work is reprinted here, only making references to Morris, where references to Kerouac were made in the original Introduction.

[585] I borrow this trajectory from the title of Originality as Repetition symposium organised in New York on 13 February 1986. The event brought together critics often associated with the *October* journal circles: Roslind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, Molly Nesbit, among others.

3.7. MAKING IT NEW, AGAIN: TRANSCRIPTION AND THE VISUAL ARTS

Although key to Goldsmith's thinking, Warhol should not be considered the sole neo-avant-garde influence relevant to defining contemporary iterative writing. Similar acts of reproduction as a creative practice have consistently been recognised as an influential approach in the field of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art, with developments in the visual arts in the second half of the twentieth century especially relevant here. Alongside Holzer and Warhol artists such as Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince,[586] among others, serve as particularly appropriate examples. While I discussed Prince's work in Chapter 1, in the context of relevant legal debates, this chapter focuses on his earlier rephotography projects as a means of devising a historical trajectory of the contemporary Iterative attitude. Both Levine and Prince are typically associated with rephotography practices, popularised during the 1980s and 1990s as a characteristic type of appropriation art. Levine's 'After Edward Weston' (1979) and 'After Walker Evans' (1981) series, for example, comprise photographs of photographs originally taken by Weston and Evans respectively, copyright to Weston and Evans and, although exact copies of the appropriated images, exhibited as 'Levines' rather than 'Westons' or 'Evanses' [Figure 43]. Employing similar methods, Prince's rephotography experiments include, among many others, his *Cowboy* series (1980-2002), consisting of rephotographed Marlboro cigarette advertisements [Figure 44]. The primary devices that Levine and Prince typically employed were inherently iterative and involved repetition, intertextuality, simulation, and appropriation. 'Their minimal mediation,' Lisa Phillips points out, 'represented a new paradigm.'[587] Their contestation of notions of subjectivity, originality, and authorship emerged as a commitment to making it new by making again, a trajectory that formed a standard of appropriation art and reverberates clearly in the related experimental poetic practices today.

[586] Both Prince and Levine are typically associated with the so called Pictures Generation that emerged in the late 1970s. Their work typically addressed notions of the copy and the original conceptualised as a response to their contemporary media culture and increasing domination of the image in information and popular culture. It was characterised by a widespread employment of appropriation techniques. Other Pictures Generation artists include John Baldessari, Barbara Kruger, and Cindy Sherman, among others. Holzer has also been associated with the group.

[587] Lisa Phillips, 'People Keep Asking: An Introduction', in *Richard Prince,* exhibition catalogue, 1 May- 22 July 1992, ed. by Lisa Phillips (Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992), 30.

FIGURE 43: SHERRIE LEVINE, *AFTER WALKER EVANS: 4* (1981) AND WALKER EVANS, *ALABAMA TENNANT FARMER WIFE* (1936)

FIGURE 44: RICHARD PRINCE, *UNTITLED (COWBOY)* (1989)

As the selection of visual art-based examples described briefly above shows, reframing, repurposing and reusing material in a new environment to create art objects is, of course, not new. But, as Goldsmith stresses, 'when it comes to writing,

these approaches have rarely been investigated.'[588] In line with Gysin, commenting on a creative disjunction between art and writing in 1959, Goldsmith's declaration presupposes a certain belatedness of literature, always, as Gysin would have it, fifty years behind art.[589] Echoing the trajectory, Goldsmith claims affinities with a range of earlier developments in the visual arts, including appropriation, and conceptual art [590] more broadly. 'What I am doing in writing has been thoroughly and exhaustively explored in other fields like visual arts, music and cinema.' But, as Goldsmith argues,

> somehow it's never really been tested on the page. While there have been numerous examples of pastiche and collage writing – taking a few lines here, a few words there, and incorporating them into your own work – we haven't seen an explosion of wholesale lifting of preexisting texts.[591]

This is, however, not exactly true, and Goldsmith fails to acknowledge a range of appropriation writing examples in works by the Pictures Generation artists themselves. There is a characteristic propensity to engage with philosophical ideas among appropriation artists, working against the backdrop of high theory, with clear influences of Barthes, Foucault, and Baudrillard, among others. In fact, as Peter Osborne points out, the history of the conceptual arts should be considered not simply in the context of but in fact as a history of ideas itself. 'More than any other form of contemporary art,' Osborne argues, 'conceptual art was a locus for the artistic interpretation of philosophical ideas. Critical writings by conceptual artists are as much a part of this history as their work.'[592] It is this attitude that gave rise to a plethora of artistic manifestos, artist statements, sometimes also incorporating methods of transcription writing.

An influential though little know example is Sherrie Levine's 1981 statement on the condition of the visual arts, written as an unreferenced transcription of the closing paragraphs of Barthes's 'The Death of the Author', substituting references to

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[588] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'What happens when sense is not foregrounded as being of primary importance?', an interview by David Mandl, *The Believer*, October 2011, accessed 23 February 2014, http://www.believermag.com/issues/201110/?read=interview_goldsmith.
[589] Brion Gysin, 'Cut-Ups Self-Explained', in *The Third Mind*, Brion Gysin and William S. Burroughs (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), 34.
[590] A complex network of multiple strands of avant-garde strategies influenced contemporary conceptual writing. Following Peter Osborne's take I use the label 'conceptual art' here as an umbrella term encompassing a range of practices, including Art & Language, appropriation art, ready-made, and Pop –all focused on different means of contesting the aesthetic definition of the artwork [Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2011)].
[591] Goldsmith, 'What happens'.
[592] Osborne, 11.

visual arts for references to literature.[593] As such, Levine's statement not only discusses but in fact performs acts of appropriation, to question the established notions of authorship and originality. There are further examples of transcription practice in Levine's work, such as her 1985 'Un coeur simple', a short story by Gustave Flaubert, transcribed word for word and published as Levine's in *New Observations* journal in 1985.[594] Prince also applied appropriation procedures in writing.[595] His 'Eleven Conversations' (1976) comprised transcribed statements attributed to Elvis Presley, appropriated from the back of bubble gum cards. 'Eleven Conversations' was arranged in eleven paragraphs, each opening with the same phrase: 'like most everybody else,' in each case completed with text lifted from the cards. For example, the first paragraph opens with: 'Like most everybody else I don't like to be broke,' followed by the second paragraph, which reads: 'Like most everybody else I like be entertained, that means I usually watch television.'[596] Here, no distinction is made between Prince's own and the appropriated text, between a tarnished cliché and a statement of a celebrity cult figure, considered important and valuable because of the status of the author, because of who he was and not what he said. Like Levine's, Prince's act of appropriation has a performative dimension to it. His textual repetition is a manifestation and an enactment of the critical concerns at play in appropriation

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[593] Sherrie Levine, 'Statement', in *Mannerism: A Theory of Culture*, exhibition catalogue, 27 March – 25 April, 1982, ed. David Buchan et al. (Vancouver BC: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1982), 48.

[594] Sherrie Levine, 'A Simple Heart (After Gustav Flaubert)', *New Observations*, 35 (1985), 15-19.

[595] As Prince points out, the origins of his appropriation practice reside in working with text: 'The first things I took were texts. They got published in *Tricks Magazine (misspelling of the title as per BOMB magazine)* in 1976. They were called *Eleven Conversations*. The texts were taken from the back of Elvis Presley bubble gum cards. The next year I started taking pictures' [Richard Prince, 'All Tomorrow's Parties', Richard Prince in conversation with Barbara Kruger, *BOMB* 3 (1982), accessed 23 February 2014, http://bombsite.com/issues/3/articles/63].

[596] Richard Prince, 'Eleven Conversations', *Tracks: A Journal of Artist Writing*, 2 (1976), 41. Prince's 'Eleven Conversations' seems to anticipate contemporary iterative projects composed by application of data mining techniques, generating a strikingly similar effects to the repetitive, formulaic discourse employed by Prince. Examples include: Cory Arcangel's *Working on My Novel* (2014), a compilation of tweets all including a phrase 'working on my novel' and published as a book: 'Now that I have a great domain name I can start working on my novel [...] When I am not studying or working on my novel: I read 50 Shades of Gray, watch HBO or Showtime, chill with friends, or party hard #Life<3' [Cory Arcangel, *Working on My Novel* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), non pag]; Tom Jenks's *An Anatomy of Melancholy* (Lulu 2013), a data mined, twitter-based reworking of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1961), created as an assemblage of every tweet using the word 'melancholy' in January 2013; Twistori and We Feel Fine projects, mining twitter and a large selection of blogs respectively for specific phrases (anything starting with 'I feel' and 'I am felling' for We Feel Fine and phrases using words 'love', 'hate', 'think', 'believe', 'feel', 'wish' for Twistori) used to create what can be seen as a digital equivalent of Prince's project (see: http://twistori.com/#i_love and http://www.wefeelfine.org/); as well as Robert Fitterman's *No,Wait. Yep. Definitely Still Hate Myself* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2014), a long poem compiling expressions of sadness and loneliness from blogs and online posts.

art, here focused on issues of commodity and celebrity fetishism that Pictures Generation responded to. The act of duplicating, as Phillips observes, the inauthentic voice Prince first heard on first reading the cards[597] is a means of raising questions of theft, originality, authorship and artistic value.

These examples evoke a particular attitude towards language in conceptual art circles, representative of what Osborne described as 'the peculiar function of texts in the institutional context of visual art.'[598] Pictures Generation writing emerges here, alongside Art & Language, as a manifestation of broader tendencies in conceptual art of the late 1960s (the so-called linguistic conceptualism, as described by Alexander Alberro).[599] As Liz Kotz noted, the turn to language originating in 1960s art has been understood as a departure from visuality and from a commitment to an object in favour of art conceptualised as a linguistic proposition. 'The adoption of linguistic models and materials,' Kotz stresses, 'took place alongside, and roughly at the same time as, the much recognised "linguistic turn" in philosophy and critical theory,'[600] the two converging to form what has been frequently referred to as idea art. However, regardless of their commitment to language illustrative of this aesthetic moment, Levine's and Prince's acts of iterative writing remain concomitant of the field of visual arts and should be treated as such, rather than as an example of an iterative poetic practice. Transcriptions by Levine and Prince stand as an aside, a footnote of sorts to their core, visual-art-based appropriation practice, perhaps a form of an artistic manifesto, and not an instance of experimental literature. In contrast, iterative writing of particular interest to my argument in this thesis makes similar gestures a feature of literary practice and its central preoccupation. A historical trajectory echoing developments in erasure poetics transpires here. Transcription, similarly to erasure, has clear roots in postmodern experiments with acts of textual repetition. But while these began as a marginalised practice in the 1970s and 1980, the models of iterative writing are gaining a marked momentum today. However, a clear distinction should be drawn between those instances of language-based art and the current literary experiments discussed here, instituted by what has come to be known as conceptual writing, briefly discussed in Chapter 1.

Dworkin acknowledges the overt affinities between conceptual literature and art but stresses the need to differentiate between the two and recognise the distinct

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[597] Phillips, 'People', 25.
[598] Osborne, 27.
[599] Alexander Alberro, 'Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), xviii.
[600] Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960 Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 8. Hereafter WTBLA.

qualities of both; 'to equate conceptual art and poetry because both use language,' Dworkin argues, 'is like confusing numbers with mathematics.'[601] Dworkin echoes LeWitt's thesis in his 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' here: 'if words are used, and they proceed from ideas about art, then they are art and not literature; numbers are not mathematics.' [602] Similarly (and as Dworkin also points out) Kosuth rejected a possibility of affinities between his text-based art and concrete poetry. For Kosuth there is 'absolutely no relationship at all. It's simply one thing superficially resembling another.'[603] The interest in language in conceptual art is associated with the visual dimension of words rather than with their legibility. It stems from a fascination with words to be looked at, rather than to be read, to paraphrase Robert Smithson's 1967 exhibition press release.[604] Although a commitment to illegibility also characterises conceptual writing, the approach is grounded in very different assumptions. Smithson exhibited *LANGUAGE to be LOOKED at and/or THINGS to be READ*, to foreground the contingency of the art object and subvert the familiar models and contexts of representation. Conceptual writing, on the other hand, interrogates the familiar models of reading and writing; it contests familiar models of literariness by engaging with text as literature. As Dworkin suggests, equating the methods of conceptual writing with those of conceptual art would require a commitment to a different set of methods and approaches:

> the equivalent move for poetry that wanted to model itself on conceptual art would be to posit a nonlinguistic object as 'the poem'. That kind of conceptual poem would insist on a poem without words.[605]

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[601] Craig Dworkin, 'The Fate of Echo,' in *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*, eds. Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith (Evanson, Ill: Nortwestern University Press, 2011), xxxv.

[602] Sol LeWitt, 'Sentences on Conceptual Art', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 107.

[603] Joseph Kosuth, 'Art as Idea as Idea', interview by Jeanne Sigel, in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings*, 1966-1990 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 51.

[604] Robert Smithson, 'LANGUAGE to be LOOK at and/or THINGS to be READ', in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 61.

[605] Dworking, 'The Fate', xxxvi. Such nonliguistic poems have also been produced by writers associated with the rise of contemporary conceptual writing. Examples include Derek Beaulieu's *Flatland* (2007) and *Local Colour* (2008) as well as Goldsmith's chapbook, *Gertrude Stein on Punctuation* (1999), among others. Beaulieu's *Flatland* is an appropriation of Edwin Abbott's 1884 novella under the same tittle and in which words are reduced to information graphs and schemas. Beaulieu explains the method in the following way: 'I begun by photocopying each page [...] I then identified each unique letter on the 1st line of each page, and traced a line – using a light-table, ink and a rule – from the first occurrence of each letter on the first line through the first appearance of each of those same letters on each subsequent line.[...] the generated result appears in a series of superimposed seismographic images which reduce *Flatland* to a two-dimensions schematic reminiscent of EKG results or stick reports [...] by reducing reading and language into paragramatical statistical analysis, content is subsumed into graphical representation of how language covers a page' [Derek Beaulieu, email to Marjorie Perloff, 1 June 2007, quoted in Marjorie

Although a departure from familiar poetic criteria characterises conceptual writing, it, nevertheless, preserves the interest in the discourse as an agent of meaning and in texts, even if not always literary, as literature. As Dworkin observes, 'the opacity of language is a conclusion of conceptual art but already a premise for conceptual writing.'[606] While conceptual art, as Lucy Lippard notes, 'offered a bridge between the verbal and the visual,'[607] the preoccupations of conceptual literature centre on writing itself.

What conceptual literature and art do have in common, however, is an interest in ideas and information rather than their expression. Foregrounded in Goldsmith's works is a possibility of appropriating the conceptual art thinking for literature, a commitment to 'learning to ask different questions, recognising that mechanical expression can be equally but differently beautiful and moving.'[608] Evocative of the emergence of conceptual art that marked a turning point in contemporary art, one at which 'the conception of the artwork as an object [...] was most directly and radically challenged,' [609] conceptual writing strives to interrogate the familiar notions of literature and literary production, by employing similar, conceptual gestures. Resorting to a conceptual art idiom, Goldsmith frequently notes the possibilities and significance of the approach: 'the implications for writing are profound,' he argues; 'by swapping LeWitt's visual concerns for literary ones, we can adopt [his] "Paragraphs" and "Sentences" as roadmaps and guidebooks for conceptual and uncreative writing.'[610] In a conceptual gesture stemming from such a proposition, and echoing Levine's manifesto composed by means of rewriting Barthes, one of Goldsmith's writer's statements is an appropriation of LeWitt's 'Paragraph's:

Perloff, Afterword to *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (York: Information as Material, 2007), 107-08]. His *Local Colour* engages with Paul Auster's novella 'Ghosts'. The appropriation here takes a form of hyperbolised erasure, where all words are removed, except for those denoting colours. These are then substituted for the colour each word describes, positioned on the page to replace each word. As a result no text is used, only blocks of colour. Similarly, Goldsmith erases all language from his *Gertrude Stein*. The work is an iteration of an excerpt from Stein's 'Poetry and Grammar' (1935) in which Stein provides a basis for the use of certain forms of punctuation over others. Goldsmith's take on Stein's text is an erasure in which only the punctuation marks from the essay remain on the page. What differentiates these experiments from minimalist and conceptual art and the hypothetical conceptual poem that Dworkin describes is the source text these writers adopt. Literature here remains at the core. As such, these works posit themselves as a conceptual response to writing but one arrived at by means of reading and engaging with literature as texts to be read. These are examples of hyperbolised erasure writing rather than conceptual art.

[606] Dworkin, 'The Fate', xxxvi.

[607] Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialisation of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 1997), x.

[608] UW, 126.

[609] Osborne, 11.

[610] UW, 128.

> I will refer to the kind of writing in which I am involved as conceptual writing. In conceptual writing the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an author uses a conceptual form of writing, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the text. This kind of writing is not theoretical or illustrative of theories; it is intuitive, it is involved with all types of mental processes and it is purposeless. It is usually free from the dependence on the skill of the writer as a craftsman. It is the objective of the author who is concerned with conceptual writing to make her work mentally interesting to the reader, and therefore usually she would want it to become emotionally dry. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the conceptual writer is out to bore the reader. It is only the expectation of an emotional kick, to which one conditioned to Romantic literature is accustomed, that would deter the reader from perceiving this writing.[611]

By comparison, the second paragraph of Sol LeWitt's text reads:

> I will refer to the kind of art in which I am involved as conceptual art. In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art. This kind of art is not theoretical or illustrative of theories; it is intuitive, it is involved with all types of mental processes and it is purposeless. It is usually free from the dependence on the skill of the artist as a craftsman. It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make her work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the conceptual artist is out to bore the viewer. It is only the expectation of an emotional kick, to which one conditioned to expressionist art is accustomed, that would deter the viewer from perceiving this art.[612]

Repeating LeWitt's words and Levine's gesture at the same time Goldsmith's conceptual writing is formulated as a refutation of Romantic expressivism and related notions of literature. This is the same approach that informs Goldsmith's iterations of Huebler's statement, constantly working with both ideas and texts of earlier avant-gardes to inform his uncreative project, creating conceptual writing and commenting on it in a singular iterative act. The same propensity for a self-reflexive creative thinking through theory of writing is clearly manifested here. As the passage quoted above illustrates, the framework for debating conceptual writing today is constantly reiterated in Goldsmith's creative and critical work, as if asking, after Atkinson,

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[611] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Paragraph on Conceptual Writing', *Electronic Poetry Center*, accessed 30 August 2013, http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/conceptual_paragraphs.html.

[612] Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 12.

whether such an attempt at defining conceptual writing can emerge as a work of conceptual writing itself.[613]

By appropriating both attitudes, ideas, and works of relevant conceptual artists and critics of conceptual art Goldsmith firmly positions himself in a long line of avant-garde tradition. His iterative poetics should therefore be conceived of as a complete iterative act, not simply an iteration of *The New York Time*s, of LeWitt's statement, not simply an attempt at copying Benjamin's or Warhol's gestures, but a form of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of iteration. In other words, writing at the Iterative turn should be seen, I suggest, as a manifestation of a very particular thinking about creativity, defined by a certain ease in appropriating, remediating, and mashing up, typical for postproduction condition, but also contingent on the attitude that triggers it.[614] Here, the logic of iteration is defined by a repetition (though not a reproduction) of an attitude, in itself iterative, that is expressed in related iterative forms. Here, as suggested in Chapter 1, attitudes become form. As such, extensive references to conceptual art predecessors that define Goldsmith's work should not be read as simply a historical footnote to his poetics but rather an inseparable element of his works, in itself a source text, constantly incorporated and iterated in his acts of repetition, where both information about conceptual art and works of conceptual art themselves serve as a material to be repurposed.

3.8. CURATING TRANSCRIPTION

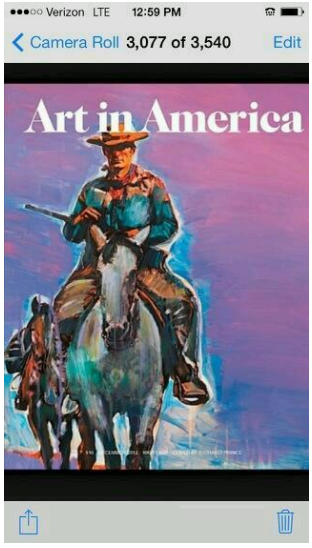

FIGURE 45: RICHARD PRINCE, 'SO AS LONG AS I PAINT COWBOYS YOU WON'T SUE ME?'

[613] See note 577 in this chapter.
[614] Goldsmith's approach brings to mind Doeringer's *60 Years Later*, appropriating in one creative gesture both Colting's text and Prince's concept to create a new work of art, as discussed in Chapter 1.

On February 23, 2014 Richard Prince tweeted a painted image of a cowboy, reminiscent of his earlier rephotography series appropriating Marlboro advertising [Figure 45]. 'So long as I PAINT cowboys you won't sue me?,'[615] Prince commented, raising questions about the paradigms of ownership and authorship that persevere in copyright. Evocative of Prince's tweeted cowboy, Goldsmith's complete project is driven by similar concerns. Goldsmith's interests reside in 'a simple act of moving information from one place to another [which] today constitutes a significant cultural act in and of itself.'[616] Interrogating possibilities of iteration by means of remediation, Goldsmith calls himself a collector of language rather than a writer.[617] His works described in this thesis together form a collection of information discourse, of news collated, reframed and appropriated as avant-garde poetry. As the most explicit manifestation of this attitude, Goldsmith's current, ongoing project brings together an amalgamation of fragments of information about New York to compose a twenty-first-century, New York version of Benjamin's representation of nineteenth-century Paris in *The Arcades Project*. A major influence on Goldsmith, Benjamin, of course, is as a collector par excellence.[618]

For Goldsmith, this interest in collecting is a manifestation of contemporary consumer attitudes; 'what we are experiencing,' Goldsmith argues,

> is an inversion of consumption, one in which we've come to engage in a more profound way with acts of acquisition over that which we are acquiring. [...] Our primary impulse, then, has, moved from creators to collectors and archivists.[619]

Today, it is the notion of collecting rather than creating content, and the related ability to manage and manipulate the information available, that emerges as a paradigm of postproduction authorship. Every act of collecting, be it of objects or information, inheres acts of collating, organising, managing, and archiving. Inevitably, a collector, or an archivist, acts as a curator of content accumulated. Curating, of course, resides in an ability to move, manage and arrange objects, as well as information about them, or, in the digital context, data or information itself. Curatorship today should be thought of, in Paul O'Neill's words, as 'a distinct practice of mediation.' The perception of the figure of the curator, O'Neill explains, has changed, 'from being a

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[615] Richard Prince, Twitter post, 23 February 2014, https://twitter.com/RichardPrince4.
[616] BB.
[617] Marjorie Perloff, 'A Conversation with Kenneth Goldsmith', *Jacket* 21 (2003), accessed 12 January 2014, http://jacketmagazine.com/21/perl-gold-iv.html.
[618] Excerpts from Goldsmith's take on *The Arcades* are currently tweeted via @CapitalNY. The work is due for publication by Verso in 2015/16.
[619] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Archiving Is The New Folk Art', *Harriet: a poetry blog*, 19 April 2011, accessed 21 February 2013, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/archiving-is-the-new-folk-art/.

caretaker of collections – a behind the scenes organiser and arbiter of taste – to an independently motivated practitioner,'[620] a source of critical discourse and ideas about aesthetics. The shift from Benjamin's nineteenth-century Paris to Goldsmith's twenty-first-century New York, away from Benjamin's collector interested in 'transfiguration of things,'[621] to Goldsmith's manipulator of digitally aggregated language, evokes this change in attitudes. To think about writing in this context as a creative rather than purely derivative practice requires, I suggest, a rejection of the traditional notion of the Romantic author, to focus instead on modes of selecting and organising – or collecting and subsequently curating source material to produce new works. Authorship conceptualised as a curatorial practice offers a new set of categories for thinking about emergent writing practices that familiar notions of authorship, creativity, and originality fail to describe and respond to adequately. As such, I suggest, it offers a model for thinking about writing at the Iterative turn. The act of curating considered as an act of authorship, an act of authorship as a manifestation of curatorial activity, assume a quality of creative acts in their own right; they produce as much as they record.

Channelling this contemporary curatorial activity, a conceptual author as curator today is a 'mediator,' 'a proactive agent in a communication chain.'[622] Artistic and literary production viewed as such relies on models of creativity conceptualised as acts of organising information critically. It is a view of creativity that echoes Deleuze's understanding of the notion as movement or flow within an active communication network. For Deleuze, 'creation is all about mediators.' Without them, Deleuze argues, nothing happened; 'I need my mediators to express myself and they'd never express themselves without me.'[623] Evoking Deleuze, Maria Lind sees curatorship as a manifestation of a similar dynamic:

> rather than being the product of the curator's labor per se, curating is the result of a network of agents' labor. The outcome should be the disturbing quality of smooth surfaces being stirred – a specific, multi-layered means of answering back in a given context.[624]

Writing as a curatorial practice, as well as curatorial practice itself, can only exist in an extensive network of interdependent mediators. A curator relies on an availability

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[620] Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012), 1-2.
[621] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2002), 9.
[622] O'Neill, *The Culture*, 25.
[623] Gilles Deleuze, 'Mediators', in *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 125.
[624] Maria Lind, 'The Curatorial', in *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, ed. Brian Kuan Wood (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), 13.

of artworks to curate. Writing conceptual literature is similarly contingent. A writer such as Kenneth Goldsmith can only continue producing new content as long as there is content being produced elsewhere. This network interdependence is what iterative writing thrives on. It derives from and self-consciously interrogates the culture of excess, of abundance of texts, more or less interesting, generated ad infinitum and always available. The development of the excessive culture is a pre-condition of not just conceptual practice, but first, and foremost, of the iterative thinking itself.

Such a trajectory most explicitly foregrounds the key presupposition of authorial agency at the Iterative turn. Goldsmith's act of authorship relies on curating the already curated content. If Goldsmith curates a weather forecast, it is a weather forecast compiled by a meteorological agency and subsequently arranged and reported by a New York radio station. To think about the traditional curatorial framework – a museum or a gallery context – every collection comprises a set of objects which represent a history, an event, or a genealogy of events. Every collection is an effort to represent the events that happened elsewhere, to reiterate them by means of an exhibition, collection, or installation – through an impossible act of their repetition. As such, a museum is always a space not of the event itself, not the Derridean thing of the event, but rather a locus of the decontextualised impression of that event, organised within a frame of new perceptions, always inevitably subjective, altering the thing. An act of curating can thus be described as an act of repetition of an impression of an event by means of its decontextualisation. As an act of curating, Goldsmith's practice iterates the logic of such curatorial repetition, while at the same time repeating the act of curating itself. It decontextualises the already decontextualised event to create a volume of experimental poetry as an impression of an impression, a repetition of a repetition. Goldsmith's acts of authorship are acts of selection and subjective interpretation not so much of the event of 9/11, Kennedy's death, or the Columbine shootings, but of any attempt at speaking and objectifying the event and its inherent impossibility. If such is the dynamic governing the creative landscape today, then it is this creative context that triggers the proliferation of iterative acts of writing. 'A creative act,' as Boris Groys argues, 'if it is understood as an iconoclastic gesture, presupposes a permanent reproduction of the context in which it is effectuated. This kind of reproduction infers the creative act from the beginning.'[625] It is the curatorial framework and its tools (including contemporary

[625] Boris Groys, 'The Topology of Contemporary Art', in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, eds. Terry Smith, Okuwi Enzewor, and Nancy Condee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 72.

digital technologies) that facilitate the aesthetic attitudes of the Iterative turn in writing.

Repetition is a defining function of a digital collection and a digital archive. The archival activity today is characterised by an inherent multiplication of copies, circulated, manipulated and eternally reproduced. Production and circulation of digital content relies on a proliferation of copies. As Goldsmith explained,

> from the moment we use the 'save as' command when composing electronic document, our archival impulse begins. 'Save as' is a command that implies replication; and replication requires more complex archival considerations: where do I store a copy? Where is the original saved? What is the relationship between the two?[626]

As a curator who deals in a contemporary archive constructed as such the writer-curator today inevitably engages in an iterative project. But, I would like to suggest, today's copies are curated copies. They do not operate as as reproductions but as repetitions, to return to Foster. As such, the process of curating a copy today can be seen as a means of generating a new original rather than a process of creating another copy. A copy as a curated copy emerges not as a multiplication of copies, always, as discussed in Chapter 1, removed from the original, but as a copy that can be seen as a manifestation of an alternative way of thinking about paradigms of originality. In such a creative framework, artistic production is manifested by means of collating and arranging content, where, as Mary Anne Staniszewski asserts, selecting what is included and what is excluded is a way in which culture is produced.[627]

The question of defining contemporary creative acts resides, then, in what Groys describes as topological inscription. Evoking conceptualism's commitment to the context as the new content, Groys associates contemporary understanding of originality with an inclusion of a work in a particular framework or situation. For Groys, contemporary art (and similarly, I suggest, conceptual writing), operates as a reversal of repetition as a derivative act. Groys argues that a context of an exhibition or an installation – a curatorial act – puts a copy out of unmarked, anonymous circulation, into a clearly defined topological here and now. If 'the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity,'[628] then the act of contextualising a curated object turns the object into an original. Groys's is an interesting take on Benjamin's aura. Like Benjamin, Groys stresses the necessity of an encounter with a work but for Groys, it is the situation of the encounter itself and not the presence of an original (key for Benjamin) that becomes a condition of

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[626] Goldsmith, 'Archiving'.
[627] Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), xxi-viii.
[628] TWOA, 214.

originality. It is necessary to see an exhibit and engage with a curated object. Similarly, it is necessary to engage with Goldsmith's unreadable text to recognise the nature of its textuality (even if popular approaches to reading Goldsmith seem to imply otherwise). As Groys argues:

> our contemporary relationship with art cannot [...] be reduced to a 'loss of aura.' Rather the modern age organises a complex interplay of dislocations and relocations, of deteriolizations and reterritorializations, of deauratizations and reauratizations. What differentiates contemporary art [and writing] from previous times is only the fact that the originality of a work in our time is not established depending on its own form, but through its inclusion in a certain context, [...] through its topological inscription.[629]

In line with Groys's trajectory, a newspaper, recontextualised and reframed as a book should be considered original. It is a manifestation of de-/re-auralised originality that enables curatorial practice as a vehicle of creativity.

However, it is not only Groys's model that is significant here. What I am interested in is his commitment to the formulation of new categories applicable to thinking about culture in its particular moment. The impulses that are reshaping attitudes towards creativity are crucial to the efforts of contemporary writing to become contemporary. What changes is a cultural convention. If, as Michael North suggests, the new medium is the new convention, and hence, in some sense a new form of art, then the increasing prominence of digitalisation today, the discovery of the new medium, is synonymous with a discovery of new possibilities, not just in terms of means of creative production but also in terms of categories established to describe them. 'Novelty,' North writes, 'is supposed to be an ontological possibility.'[630] But an encounter of a new medium and the resulting aesthetic attitudes, inevitably require a change in an ontological system. As a result, operating by means of familiar categories is no longer sufficient to describe the emergent cultural moment. The shift from authorship to curatorship, from original to copy, as it emerges at the Iterative turn, also assumes a reconceptualisation of the notions at the base level. The copy as an alternative means of thinking about the original, within the contemporary context, is not just a reproduction but a curated copy in its topological inscription. Today, Groys suggests:

> we are unable to stabilize a copy as a copy as we are unable to stabilize an original as an original. There are no eternal copies, just as there are no eternal originals. Reproduction is as much infected by originality as originality is infected by reproduction. By circulating through different contexts a copy becomes a series of different originals. Every change

[629] Groys, 'The Topology,' 74.
[630] Michael North, *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 3.

> of context, every change of medium can be interpreted as a negation of the staus of a copy as a copy – as an essential rapture, as a new start that opens out a new future. In this sense, a copy is never really a copy, but rather always a new original in a new context. Every copy is by itself a flaneur; it experiences time and time again its own 'profane illumniations', turning it into an original. It loses old auras, and gains new ones. It remains, perhaps, the same copy, but it becomes different originals.[631]

Thinking about creativity constructed as such requires a rejection of the established paradigms. Instead, it is a manifestation of an emergent set of attitudes, a space of exploration of creative possibilities that the Iterative turn as a transtional cultural moment opens up. To borrow from Terry Smith, commenting on the shifting curatorial scene today, this is a framework for conceptualising authorship that is 'emergent, imperfectly grasped, but nonetheless an interesting way of thinking about art,'[632] and about contemporary modes of creativity more broadly. The ambiguous status of the contemporary copy, original, as well as the author, constantly negotiating attempts at production, consumption, reproduction of meaning, constantly out of joint, is a mark of its innovative contemporaneity.

'Innovation,' Terry Smith argues, 'is most likely to occur in zones of ambiguity.'[633] For Smith, the strategy of contemporary art, and, similarly, I suggest, of iterative writing, relies on creating a context that transforms a certain form or thing, 'that can make a certain form or thing look other, new and interesting – even if this form has already been collected.'[634] The same preoccupation with inherent possibilities of contextual transformation, so prominent in Goldsmith and Groys, transpires here. If, as Smith explains, traditional art worked on the level of form, contemporary art, and instances of contemporary experimental writing, work on the level of context: 'framework, background, or a new theoretical interpretation.'[635] Interestingly, North points to the Latin meaning of 'to innovate' – 'to renew or reform, not to start over afresh.'[636] What the invention entails is the ability to arrive at 'new relations, new arrangements of pre-existing forms.'[637] It is always, Groys suggests, 'first and foremost a repetition of tradition.'[638] The novelty of Goldsmith's project is exactly that. It is context bound as a manifestation of the here and now, arrived at by means of multifaceted iteration of texts, attitudes, and traditions. An act of collating,

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631 Groys, 'The Topology,'75.
632 Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012), 32.
633 Ibid, 239.
634 Ibid, 71.
635 Ibid.
636 North, 3.
637 Ibid, 159.
638 Boris Groys, *On the New* (London: Verso, 2014), 190.

curating, and archiving current news posits an attempt at building an archive of the now that immediately falls back on itself, always defined by the impossibility of the project, always at once too soon and too late, and hence inherently contemporary, in line with Agamben's paradox.[639] As a record of 9/11, *The Day,* for example, is defined by this trajectory, never engaging with the moment itself, always out of joint with the history it is trying to record, too soon and at the same time too late to capture the event it nevertheless evokes. In his attempt to reframe the here and now of news, Goldsmith's work both preserves and subverts the temporality of the present and in this attempt turns into a form of curating the contemporary itself.

Similar acts of engaging with the present, instead of representing, involve, Lind suggests, presenting, performing 'something in the here and now instead of merely mapping it from there and then.' [640] Lind describes such activity as a manifestation of 'the curatorial' as distinguished from an act of curating. For Lind, the curatorial is a more inventive and more critical alternative. The distinction that Lind makes stems from an association of curating with a practice of putting together an exhibition, while 'the curatorial' implies a methodology. The curatorial, unlike the practice of curating, is not bound to a specific exhibition space. Instead, to quote Lind:

> 'the curatorial' [...] takes art as its starting point but then situates it in relation to specific contexts, themes, and questions in order to challenge the status quo. And it does so from various positions such as that of curator, an editor, an educator, a communication person, and so on. This means that the curatorial can be employed, or performed, by people in a number of different capacities [...] There is a qualitative difference between curating and the curatorial. The latter [...] carries potential for change. [641]

The curatorial, again, relies on the possibilities that emerge with a change of context as a creative rapture of space of innovation. It is an intellectual framework that lends itself to thinking beyond the visual arts. Driven and defined by a propensity to change and innovate, the curatorial emerges as a vehicle of the Iterative turn.

As Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski point out, in recent years, concepts of curating have entered the everyday discourses of disciplines other than the visual arts, reverberating in approaches to dance, theatre, film, design, and architecture, as well as related academic research in sociology, anthropology and philosophy. For Bismarck et al., 'the curatorial opens perspectives onto cultural

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[639] See: Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary', in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2009).
[640] Lind, 'The Curatorial,' 65.
[641] Maria Lind, 'To Show or Not to Show', interview by Jens Hoffmann, *Mousse Magazine*, 31 (2011), accessed 4 April 2014, http://moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=759.

practices that insist on collectivity, changing subject and object relations, and dynamic hierarchies.'[642] In such a framework, the traditional tasks of artists, curators and writers start to shift, 'from one actor to another, from artist to curator to critic, and from an educational setting to an exhibiting or publishing institution,'[643] from a writer to a writer-curator. Understood as such, the curatorial should be seen as a particularly significant concept to addressing the nature of creative practice, and the ambiguous status of authorship implicit in writing by iterative means. It is the commitment to the exploration of such ambiguous spaces of emergence that makes the curatorial particularly relevant to debating originality and innovation of iterative writing practices and their contemporaneity. The curatorial as a system of writing becomes a potential condition for the instantiation of the techniques of experimental writing described in this thesis, a site of erasure or transcription. While an act of iterative writing produces an event of writing that assumes a dual function of a statement on iteration and a creative iterative act at the same time, the curatorial, Rogoff argues, is a manifestation of a moment in which different knowledges interacting with one another produce something that transcends their position as knowledge – an event of knowledge.[644] Read as a manifestation of the curatorial, an event of writing not only assumes the function of the event of knowledge, it makes explicit the condition in which it operates. It brings to the fore its mode of knowledge production as an event of knowledge itself. The approach, so prominent in the neo-neo-avant-garde attitude, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is a trigger for a transformation of writing about writing into curating understood as an embodiment of the act itself, as a manifestation of the curatorial.

The press release for the Cultures of the Curatorial conference held in 2010 represents the emergence of the curatorial as a new creative category. It describes the notion of the curatorial as a concept 'not dissimilar to the function of the concepts of the filmic or the literary.'[645] It is this drive towards reclassification, predicated on the innovative yet familiar categorisation, that is of significance here. The notion of the curatorial is provoked, as Rogoff explains, by a need for another vocabulary, as an exploration of what Rogoff describes as 'the possibility of thinking how we might know from a different perspective' [646] that at the same time becomes a new

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[642] Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski, Introduction to *Cultures of the Curatorial* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 12.
[643] Ibid, 12.
[644] Irit Rogoff, 'Curating/Curatorial', in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 23.
[645] Press release for 'Cultures of the Curatorial Conference, Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig, 22-24 January 2010, accessed 3 April 2014, http://www.artandeducation.net/announcement/cultures-of-the-curatorial/.
[646] Rogoff, 'Curating/Curatorial,' 32-5.

classification in its own right. When applied to the literary context, I suggest, 'the curatorial' turns into a category of the literary as a new paradigm of authorship. Rogoff sees the vocabulary of the arts and art criticism as lacking. Similarly, the terminology that conceptual writing inherited by its inscription into the established literary frameworks is misplaced. In its extraneousness, it brings to the fore the fleeting temporality of even the most established categories. As Rogoff puts it, 'we develop vocabulary only to leave it behind and develop the next vocabulary that is part of the open process.'[647] Thinking about writing as the curatorial evokes the course.

Both an act of curating in a visual arts context and curating as a mode of writing a conceptual poem are exercises of the curatorial. And it is the curatorial as defined by Lindt that I posit as a framework for thinking about models of iterative writing today. Even if such thinking about writing does not advance a complete model of authorship for the contemporary moment, moving towards the curatorial as a means of conceptualising creative writing is a space where the potentiality of thinking about writing by other means can be explored, it is a structure of the new as described by North. Dismissing acts of iteration as plagiarism or copyright infringement, as illustrated by examples of *Salinger* v. *Colting* and *Suntrust Bank* v. *Houghton Miffin* in Chapter 1, manifests what Terry Smith describes as a conformist contemporary.[648] Appropriating the curatorial as a creative paradigm of writing offers a more daring, iconoclastic model for approaching the contemporary, a way of interrogating the complexities of the here and now and the possibilities of exploring them. For Rogoff, 'it is an opportunity to "unbound" the work from all those categories and practices that limit its ability to explore that which we do not yet know or that which is not yet a subject in the world.'[649]

3.9. Curating at the Iterative Turn

Interesting parallels can be drawn between the increasingly ambiguous status of the copy and the original that Groys describes and shifting attitudes towards curatorship in the visual arts today. Groys suggests that 'contemporary art can be understood primarily as an exhibition practice' and that 'it is becoming increasingly

[647] Ibid, 35.
[648] Smith, *Thinking*, 76.
[649] Irit Rogoff, 'Smuggling: An Embodied Criticality', *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies*, August 2006, accessed 2 April 2014, http://eipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling.

difficult today to differentiate between the artist and the curator.'[650] Groys alludes to what has been described as a curatorial turn in arts manifested in the rise of a curator as a creator and meta-artist also evoked in historical transformations of museums. Traditionally funded by governments, museums or galleries used to operate as centres of administration and the governing of culture by civil servants. There is a strong sense of service to the dominant ideology that can be associated with the original museum practice. As such, the developments that have constituted the advances of the curatorial practice can be seen as an extension of the historical avant-gardes, with avant-garde commitment to institutional critique, rejection of the bourgeois institution of art, and the dominant aesthetic paradigms. As O'Neill explained, for groups such as Dadaists, the constructivists, and The Surrealists an attempt at subversion of exhibition design was a means of critiquing the passive experience of art and the exhibition space.[651] Such affinities between avant-garde and the history of curating offer an important framework for appropriating the curatorial as a discourse relevant to contemporary literary avant-garde practices.

It was only in the late 1960s, with the appearance of exhibition organisers working independently of museums and fixed museum posts, that curatorial practices started attracting attention. Seth Siegelaub's reference to the shifting exhibition production conditions that made visible the curatorial mediation as 'demystification' has proven particularly influential:

> I think in our generation we thought that we could demystify the role of the museum, the role of the collector, and the production of the artwork; for example, how the size of a gallery affects the production of art, etc. In that sense we tried to demystify the hidden structures of the art world.[652]

The demystification that Siegelaub described marked a departure from the traditional critique of the artwork as an autonomous object displayed as part of an exhibition, towards what O'Neill discusses as 'forms of curatorial criticism in which the space of exhibition was given critical precedence over that of the object of art.'[653] The rise of the curatorial criticism seen as such was explicitly grounded in the intellectual sensibilities of the time, the prominence of post-structuralist thought and Barthes'

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[650] Boris Groys, 'Politics of Installation,' *e-flux journal* 2 (2009), accessed 11 February 2014, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-installation/.
[651] Paul O'Neill, *The Culture*, 10.
[652] Seth Siegelaub, 'Action Man: Paul O'Neill Interviews Seth Siegelaub', interview by Paul O'Neill, *Curatorial Network,* 2007, accessed 11 February 2014, http://www.curatorial.net/go/data/en/files/ActionMan%28SethSiegelaub%29.pdf.
[653] Paul O'Neill, 'The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse', in *The Biennial Reader*, eds. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Selveig Øvstebø (Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall, 2010), 241.

'The Death of the Author' in particular. The change in curatorial thinking at the time mirrors shifting attitudes towards authorship.

O'Neill stresses, however, that it was not until the 1990s that 'the rise of the curator as creator' and related critical practices gained prominence. Evoking the changing attitude Jonathan Watkins, writing for *Art Monthly* in 1987, claimed, for example, acts of curating should be considered synonymous with Marcel Duchamp's '"Readymade Aided" artworks.'[654] Jan Hoet's Documenta 9 exhibit in 1992 could be referred to here as another useful example. Hoet's project manifested a commitment to expressing the creative agency of the curator, or, as Hoet put it, a 'curatorial artist.' In the introduction to the catalogue, Hoet put forward a model of exhibition as discourse, authored by a curatorial artist, or perhaps, a curatorial author: 'this exhibition is my text; every work that is contributed is a postulate; and the discourse unfolds as one walks through spaces.'[655] The authorship of the text as conceived of by Hoet resides in the process of its compilation; it is the process and not the content that constitutes the creative output. This convergence of curatorship and authorship, models of artistic and literary production that Hoet postulates reverberate in the methods of conceptual writing today, as does Watkins's readymade curatorial thinking. Both examples are indicative of a particular turn to discourse in curating. Coupled with what O'Neill referred to as 'the ascendency of this "curatorial gesture" in the nineties,' [656] these curatorial attitudes began to establish curatorial practice as a potential space of critique. This environment was defined by blurring boundaries between the critic and the curator. As Liam Gillick observes, 'people you might have met before who in the past were critics were now curators.'[657] Gillick describes the practice of curating in the 1990s as multiple activity that involved being a mediator, producer, interface and neo-critic. Identified by Buchloh as a 'transition from practice to discourse,' [658] curatorial activity of the 90s was rooted in the proliferation of curatorial anthologies, curatorial summits and symposia but was, as O'Neill stresses, a predominantly curator-led discourse. Although the interest might have shifted from the artist's individuality to a more interactive and critical curatorial view of creative production, the attitudes to curatorship at the time were defined by the inherent divergence of artistic and curatorial gestures.

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654 Jonathan Watkins, 'The Curator as Artist', *Art Monthly* 111 (1987), 27.
655 Jan Hoet, quoted in O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating*, 97.
656 O'Neill, 'The Curatorial Turn', 241.
657 Liam Gillick, quoted in O'Neill, 'The Curatorial Turn', 241.
658 Benjamin Buchloh, 'Since Realism There Was…', in *L'Exposition Imaginaire: The Art of Exhibiting in the Eighties*, ed. Evelyn Beer and Riet de Leeuw ('s-Gravenhage: Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, 1989), 98.

But the interest in discourse that Buchloh stresses not just as a supplement but as a substitute for practice is significant here, I suggest, and opens possibilities for incorporating the curatorial into literary debates. The affinities between curating and creative writing become particularly apparent in the context of the curatorial turn. Curating now increasingly strives to define itself in terms of discourse by establishing 'the grammar of the exhibition.'[659] The curatorial, conceptualised as such, draws metaphorical connections between language and exhibition. As Smith describes it, an exhibition becomes 'an array of speech acts [...] a conversational setting.'[660] Today, Dave Beech and Gavin Wade declared 'even talking is doing something,'[661] even talking can be conceived of as an event, not an event-exhibition, but instead an event of writing, and one particularly indicative of the contemporary preoccupation with language in curatorial and creative practice, of language as a manifestation of a certain propensity for iterative writing as it emerges today.

Groys argues that today 'there is no longer any "ontological" difference between making and displaying art. In the context of contemporary art to make is to show things as art.'[662] The curatorial model of writing formulated here exemplifies an analogous dynamic. What I see as a widespread curatorial attitude to writing could be seen as deriving from this history of changing attitudes to professional curatorial practice in the visual arts. The writer as curator emerges under the postproduction condition and assumes the role of a curator as the critical, creative producer of meaning and discourse, the curator after the curatorial turn, rather than an administrator cum exhibition maker. An artwork for such a contemporary curator is just a source of raw material utilised in the process of production of what John Miller describes as a 'total artwork of the exhibition.'[663] Similarly, Goldsmith's works such as *Seven American Deaths* as a compilation of discursive fragments dictated only by Goldsmith's choices, turn the selection of news into raw material to be arranged, mediated, and used to create a new subjectivity – a text as a curated literary object contributing to Goldsmith's complete project as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Kenneth Goldsmith. While the shifting attitudes to the practice of curating and 'the curatorial' might produce a new genre of exhibition, thinking about authorship as curatorship is,

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[659] Smith, *Thinking*, 48.
[660] Ibid, 48-9.
[661] Dave Beech and Gavin Wade, *Curating in the 21st Century* (Walsall: New Art Gallery, 1999), 9-10.
[662] Groys, 'Politics'.
[663] John Miller, 'The Show You Love to Hate: A Psychology of the Mega-Exhibition', in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London and New York: Routledge , 1996), 272.

similarly, indicative of a generic change engendered by the emergence of conceptualism in literature and iterative writing more broadly.

As Robert Cook suggested, a curator is always 'between spaces, discourse and modes of thinking and doing.' For Cook, 'a curator is [...] always not a curator.'[664] In a similar manner, a conceptual writer is always and at the same time is not a writer, always negotiating familiar paradigms and methods of their rearticulation. A curator, and like a curator, a conceptual writer, or, perhaps writer as curator, can be seen as a conduit, to borrow from Cook:

> being a curator-as-conduit is to be utterly contingent and floating, always between forms and formations. A curator is betweenness incarnate. Therefore, maybe, a curator is someone who is equally not a curator.[665]

Curatorship conceptualised as such is a category of creative production that operates in an ambiguous creative space of production of meaning rather than objects themselves. Writing seen as a curatorial practice is, in Cook's words, writing as finding; it is 'a practice about negotiation and betweenness. It isn't a thing necessarily. It is a set of occasions [...] the act of curating [...] as a declaration of agency and desire.'[666] It is, to return to North, a space of ambiguity that facilitates innovation and change. Here the iterative and the curatorial thinking converge as a manifestation of the Iterative turn.

We are experiencing today what could be described as an incredibly pervasive curatorial moment not just in artistic and literary environments but also in widespread popular culture. The debates surrounding curatorial practice intensify today and, as Alex Ferguson observed, the linguistic shift and the recent appearance of the verb 'to curate,' the term originally only used as a noun, is indicative of the currency and vitality of the debates.[667] Around ten years ago DJ-ing was the job *du jour* (and it is not insignificant that Kenneth Goldsmith, or Kenny G, has background in DJ-ing himself). Today, everyone is a curator. It is possible to curate a pop-up shop, a selection of organic food at Whole Foods; readings and magazines are now curated rather than organised or edited. A DJ is now a curator, and Mark Ronson curating a music show for Channel 4 in February 2011 is only one of many examples. 'The title of curator,' Smith explains, 'is assumed by anyone who has a [...] role in bringing about a situation in which something creative might be done, who manages the

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[664] Robert Cook, 'On Curating', an interview by Hannah Matthews, *ABC Arts*, 12 November 2013, accessed 06 June 2014, http://www.abc.net.au/arts/stories/s3889502.htm.
[665] Ibid.
[666] Ibid.
[667] Alex Ferguson, 'I Curate, You Curate, We Curate', in *Art Monthly* 269 (2003), 7.

possibility of invention.'[668] Dorothea van Hantelmann recognises this skill, even art of selecting as a cultural practice in its own right. 'Only with an understanding of this new culture of choosing,' van Hantelmann stresses, 'can we recognise the embeddedness of curatorial practice in the present socioeconomical order of Western societies.'[669]

This juxtaposition of the ubiquity of curating in relation to its socio-economic context is significant and points to a broader tendency in contemporary attitudes to engaging with content and information. The contributors to a recent n+1 publication, *What was a hipster* (2010), associate the widespread curatorship with a rise of a 'prosumer'– a consumer who prefers to select artefacts rather than produce them.[670] Today, the phenomenon of prosumerism is becoming of increasing interest to socio-economic debates focused on emerging consumer behaviours influenced by the networked, participatory online cultures. This offers a possible framework for defining the emergence of the curatorial, iterative shift in creative attitudes. As George Ritzer noted, the notion of prosumerism is not, as yet, extensively theorised or researched and has been recognised by social sciences only very recently. Earlier attempts at redefining consumer culture in a similar fashion include Alvin Toffler's 1980s discussions of the Third Wave economics of tomorrow[671] as well as Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt's predicted shift towards prosumer attitudes: 'at electric speeds', McLuhan and Nevitt suggested, 'the consumer becomes producer as the public becomes participant role player.'[672] McLuhan's take is typically grounded in the future of technological and media change that runs through his writings. And it is the future as anticipated by McLuhan, manifested in the contemporary digital present, that seems to have triggered these exact changes in approaches to thinking about consumer attitudes that reverberate clearly in contemporary aesthetics as well. As Steve Collins puts it, 'the promises of Web 2.0 have fostered a "prosumer" creative

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[668] Smith, *Thinking*, 17.
[669] Dorothea von Hantelmann, 'Affluence and Choice: The Social Significance of the Curatorial', in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, eds. by Beatrice von Bismarck, Jorn Schafaff and Thomas Weski (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 44.
[670] Mark Greif argues that today consumer purchases become increasingly understood as a form of art [Mark Greif, 'Positions', in *What Was the Hipster: A Sociological Investigation*, ed. Mark Greif, Kathleen Ross, and Dayna Tortorici (New York: n+1 Goundation, 2010), 12]. Margo Jefferson points to a cultural shifts from consumerism to participation [Margo Jefferson, '19 Questions', *What Was the Hipster*, 101], while Dayna Tortorici makes a direct connection between curating, remixing and prosumerism [Dayna Torterici, 'You know it when you see it', *What Was the Hipster*, 122].
[671] See: Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (London: William Collins, 1980). Toffler argued societies operate on the basis of 'waves', each wave pushing older societies and cultures aside. He divided history of mankind into three waves, the most recent, Third Wave being the post-industrial society.
[672] Marshal McLuhlan and Barrington Nevitt, *Take Today: The Executive as Dropout* (Ontario: Longman, 1972), 4

class that blends media consumption with production to create new works that are freely disseminated online.'[673] Curatorship today, then, stems from a particular kind of technological thinking; it is as much a manifestation of digital content curation as it is of curatorship in the visual arts context. The notion of consumption is being transformed as a result of the increased dependence on exchanges of information that replace the traditional, material products of labour.

The contemporary transition towards prosumerism is probably best illustrated here by means of comparing Warhol's means of production and Goldsmith's equivalent means of postproduction, where the transition is made from Warhol's Factory, where the abundance of things is produced, objects of particular interest to hyper-consumer society, to a desktop networked computer generating a plethora of information. In the digital economy of user-generated content the blurring of boundaries between consumption and production transpires explicitly in attitudes towards creative acts such as Goldsmith's. Today the binarity that relies on a distinction between consumer and producer breaks down. Von Hantelmann suggests that a selector should be considered a paradigmatic personality type in the contemporary consumer society. But the selection criteria that govern the choices of contemporary selector are no longer primarily purpose oriented, i.e. driven by necessity, but increasingly aesthetic and driven by subjective preferences.[674] As such, van Hantelmann's framework can be seen as an explanation of the contemporary rise in the proliferation of practices of iteration as a creative model and the related significance of the curatorial as a means of engaging with culture. Today, a curator assumes a role of 'a virtuoso in choosing and making these choices meaningful – in an act that can nonetheless never be entirely rationalised, and in this sense has quasi-artistic characteristics.'[675] The process of choosing is considered not just 'as receptive capacity, but as a productive and generative force.'[676] In fact, a similar trajectory marks attitudes characterising the contemporary differentiation between author and reader, creator and the audience. When considered as a model for thinking about literary practices today, a prosumer is not just a reader who gives a text new interpretation, a new chain of signification, but rather a reader who, in the process of reading, also creates a completely new work, turning news into a poetry volume, for example. The post-structuralist engagement with text characterised by a preoccupation with the agency of the reader as a source of meaning seems

673 Steve Collins, 'Digital Fair: Prosumption and the fair use defence', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 10.1 (2010), 38.
674 von Hantelmann, 45.
675 Ibid, 47.
676 Ibid, 49.

hyperbolised, or, perhaps, literalised, in the context. What Barthes posited as a post-structuralist interpretative framework, in the postproduction model of creativity – in the prosumerist approach – turns into a model of literary production. The choice itself becomes recognised as a manifestation of aesthetic qualities.

Understanding contemporary modes of consumption and production defined as such is evocative of Baurriaud's postproduction philosophy and Goldsmith's explanation of the logic of conceptual writing. And similar to the postproduction moment and related poetic and aesthetic attitudes, the activity of prosumersim tends to be associated with, and considered a result of, contemporary habits of managing information online; copying, pasting, curating a twitter feed, a blog, or a Pinterest page, all translating into attitudes towards reality off-line, as the Heideggerian essence of technology. Curating today turns into an act of responding to the technological possibilities that open up. And like the emergent notion of prosumer culture, curatorial practice in both art and writing seems to lack the vocabulary to successfully describe the shifting attitudes to authorship and originality that are currently formed. While inscribing Goldsmith's approach to writing into the institutionalised, familiar context of creative writing and originality is an antagonism and can only lead to a misinterpretatation of the practice, thinking about authorship as an expression of the curatorial offers a possible alternative framework. Juxtaposed, conceptualism and the curatorial create a discursive network of creative attitudes today, as they emerge at the backdrop of prosumer-driven postproduction culture to propose a model of thinking about the changing nature of creativity at the Iterative turn.

CHAPTER 4

CODE

INTRODUCTION: WRITING IN AN EXPANDED FIELD

The 2012 MLA convention featured, as part of the programme, an exhibition of *Electronic Literature*, curated by Dene Grigar, Lori Emerson, and Kathi Inman Berens. 'It may seem odd that one would curate literature,' Grigar wrote in an accompanying statement, 'for don't we in literature call the practice of organizing works into a coherent focus for reading "anthologizing?"'[677] This preoccupation with a problematic framework within which to place, disseminate, and discuss the emergent literary form brings my discussion of the curatorial as a model of authorship for conceptual writing into the digital domain. As Grigar notes, dealing with divergent forms of electronic literature requires a shift in textual categories. Drawing from notions found in the arts is, however, entirely compatible with thinking behind electronic literature since contemporary computational models of writing involve, as N. Katherine Hayles stresses, 'sound, animation, motion, video, kinestetic involvement, and software functionality, among others.'[678] This expanded field of writing leads, Barrett Watten argues, 'to making of art in new genres, as a self-reflexive writing practice that creates ground for new meaning.'[679] Computer programming and artistic programming (a term frequently used to discuss practices of curating) converge in the context of such multimodal forms of writing to create a literary networked operation of sorts or, to borrow Jack Burnham's term, a form of systems aesthetics.[680]

Writing in 1968, Burnham described the state of his contemporary culture as a shift towards what he understood as a new aesthetic model.[681] For Burnham, the

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[677] Dene Grigar, 'Why Curating? A Curatorial Statement about Electronic Literature and Works on Desktop', *Rhizomes*, 24 (2012), accessed 17th April 2014, http://www.rhizomes.net/issue24/tata.html, 4.

[678] N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing Machines* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 20.

[679] Watten's notion of poetry in an expanded field builds on Rosalind Krauss's 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979), theorising postmodern move away from fixity of genres. See: Barrett Watten, 'Poetics in the Expanded Field: Textual, Visual, Digital…', in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories,* ed. Adelaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 336.

[680] Although typically referred to today as systems aesthetics, Burnham described his model as Systems Esthethics in his article published in *Artforum* in 1968. I will use the established, standardised spelling, rather than Burnham's original [Jack Burnham, 'Systems Esthetics', *Artforum*, September 1968, accessed 12 September 2014, https://artforum.com/inprint/issue=196807&id=32466&pagenum=5].

[681] Interestingly, what Burnham proposed was a curatorial model of thinking about art. 'The priorities of the present age,' Burnham wrote,' revolve around the problem of organisation' [Burnham, 'Systems']. Burnham's core conceptual assertions were based on his appropriation of cybernetic Systems Theory for art. At the core of Systems Theory is an interest in relationships between objects and not in the objects themselves, where the relations form the extent of any given system. For Burnham, a system is '"a complex of components in interaction," comprised of material, energy, and information in various

late 1960s exemplified a transient cultural stage, defined by a move away from 'an *object-oriented* to a *system-oriented* culture.'[682] What characterises Burnham's model and the aesthetic attitudes that it brought to the fore is an engagement in the way things are done and not with things alone. I am interested in Burnham's thinking as a starting point for this chapter as it explicitly anticipates debates about aesthetics, as well as emerging critical discourses about creative paradigms, that dominate in the twenty-first century. Today, as Adelaide Morris stresses, '[w]hat we see and do is conditioned by a technoenvironment of digital computers, cell phones, PDAs, video games, email, networked chat rooms, networked archives, and ubiquitous online banking and commerce.' What prevails, however, is a certain disjunction between practice and the means of conceptualising it; 'what we think,' Morris observes, 'is conditioned by concepts developed, for the most part, in a world of print.'[683] This is a trajectory that also manifests itself in literary studies and the arts more broadly. However, as Hayles argues, this inherent affinity of criticism with print culture has not previously been recognised and the issue is only surfacing as a result of the growing prominence of digital culture. For Hayles, the need 'to develop vocabularies and concepts appropriate to coded media that recognize their specificity' makes for an urgent project for the twenty-first century.[684] I have already touched upon similar problems concerning the inadequacy of traditional categories of authorship, originality, and creativity to thinking through contemporary experimental poetics in the context of my reading of transcription as a poetic practice. Building on this discussion specifically in relation to the disjunction that Morris and Hayles both foreground, this chapter represents an attempt at developing a more relevant model of thinking about contemporary poetics as an iterative project by means of engaging with representative practices in computer generated poetry.

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degrees of organisation' [Burnham, 'Systems']. But, importantly, his focus is conceptual, favouring ideas rather than material limits; 'the system approach [...] deals in a larger problem of boundary concepts' [Burnham, 'Systems']. As will be discussed later in this chapter this approach reverberates clearly in contemporary approaches to code poetry. Like Burnham's systems aesthetics, texts discussed here, in their conflation of technological and aesthetic thinking, are an attempt at arriving at a theoretical framework for thinking about art alternative to the dominant approaches.

[682] Burnham, 'Systems'.

[683] Adelaide Morris, 'New Media Poetics: As We May Think/How to Write', in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories,* eds. Adelaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 2.

[684] N. Katherine Hayles, 'The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext', *Narrative*, 9.1. (2001), 21.

4.1. WRITING AND TECHNOLOGY: 'A NEXT STAGING'

As discussed earlier in this thesis, I see exercises in contemporary experimental print literature as indicative of an attitude towards texts as an essence of technology. In this chapter, however, I intend to focus on the direct interplay of text and technology and the resulting aesthetic practices and attitudes, here presented as another instance of iterative writing. Currently evolving, the field of computer-generated literature struggles with an amalgamation of terms and concepts, often used interchangeably, while generic distinctions are not always explicit. Morris and Swiss, for example, discuss a range of contemporary electronic literature practices under the umbrella term of New Media Poetics. John Cayley describes writing emergent in the new media context as networked and programmable, the term 'electronic literature' is propagated by Electronic Literature Organisation, while Loss Pequeño Glazier favours 'e-poetries' or digital poetics. While the field I focus on here is eclectic and generically diverse, the texts discussed have in common a characteristic commitment to systems and processes, an interest in how things are done rather than the things themselves. As Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland stress, 'electronic literature and digital art need to be studied by operating them, examining not only their outputs but also their interfaces.'[685] My focus on electronic writing resides in a similar understanding of its dynamics and a related interest in the possibilities of writing by iterative means that electronic environments create.

Key to my argument is a recognition that although examples of computer generated poetics might seem like a simple remediation from a printed page to a computer screen, the texts are built on a much more complex model of creative production. As Glazier emphasises,

> it is important to note that that digital poetries are not merely print poetry repositioned in the new medium. Instead, e-poetries extend the investigation of innovative practice as it occurred in print media, making possible the continuation of lines of inquiry that could not be fulfilled in that medium.[686]

Electronic literature offers, to quote Morris, 'a new order of writing,'[687] or, as Strickland describes it, a 'next staging' rather than a recapitulation, on-screen, of

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[685] Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland, 'cut to fit the toolspun course: Discussing Creative Code in Comments'*, Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 7.1 (2013), accessed 12 May 2014, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/1/000149/resources/source/000149.html. Hereafter CTF.

[686] Los Pequeño Glazier, *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), 26.

[687] Morris, 'New Media', 9.

earlier experimental poetry methods and techniques.[688] The confluence of avant-garde and new media thinking that transpires in both Glazier's and Strickland's statements is characteristic of current approaches towards computer-generated writing and, hence, of particular relevance to this thesis. Alan Golding, for example, points to the contemporary rise of 'our first immaterial avant-garde.'[689] Morris distinguishes between critical approaches to first and second generation electronic literature, to associate the latter (of particular relevance to my argument) with strategies of avant-garde poetics,[690] while for Steve Tomasula the tensions that

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[688] Stephanie Strickland, 'Poetry and the Digital World', in *Hidden Agendas: Unreported Poetics*, ed. Louis Armand (Praha: Literaria Pregensia Books, 2010), 224.

[689] Alan Golding, 'Language Writing, Digital Poetics, and Transnational Materialities', in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*, eds. Adelaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 250. Questions of materiality are at the centre of debates about digital texts and objects. And while the notion of the immateriality of the digital text is not discussed in this thesis, it is an important consideration that also contributes, I suggest, to an interest in thinking about text as process, event, and performance rather than as a self-contained object. The unique ontologies of data as text posit challenges to established notions of authenticity and originality, with a propensity to think of a digital text as immaterial. Alan Liu, for example, sees immateriality as a textual condition of post-industrial culture [Alan Liu, 'Transcendental Data: Toward a Cultural History and Aesthetics of the New Encoded Discourse', *Critical Inquiry*, 31 (2004), 49-84]. Marie-Laure Ryan talks about the digital medium as an arrangement of 'largely immaterial semiotic objects' [Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Cyperspace, Cybertexts, Cybermaps', *Dichtung Digital: A Journal of Art and Culture in Digital Media*, 2004, accessed 10 September 2014, http://www.dichtung-digital.org/2004/1/Ryan/index.htm]. More recent debates on materialities of the digital text problematise this thinking and point to a recognition that, as Matthew G. Kirschenbaum puts it, 'nothing in this world is ever truly immaterial' [Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, 'The .textual Condition', in *Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era,* eds. N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 58]. This more ambiguous take on materialities of the digital sphere finds its manifestations in a number of recent creative projects. A propensity to rematerialise the immaterial digital textual object is an emerging interest among authors of the immaterial avant-garde. Examples of the attitude include: Kenneth Goldsmith's Printing out the Internet project, a crowdsourced installation committed to printing all of the Internet; Nick Montfrot's *#!* (2014), a volume of short poetic texts printed alongside code that generated them; Isac Bertran's *code {poems}* (2012), a poetry volume collating a selection of poems by coders, where the printed texts are the executable code itself; or all works published by Traumawien, an independent Vienna-based publisher focusing on rematerialised digital texts transformed into print publications. This interest in materiality of the digital is also reflected in the rapid rise to prominence of media archaeology as an independent discipline. For studies in the field see for example: Jusi Parikka's *What is Media Archaeology* (2012), the work of Lori Emerson at Media Archaeology Lab at the University of Colorado Boulder, or Nick Montfort's The Trope Tank at the MIT.

[690] Morris's taxonomy builds on Hayles's, as developed in her *Writing Machines* (2002). The first generation electronic literature includes hypertext literature composed between 1985 and 1995, i.e. Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story* (1987), Stuart Moultrop's *Victory Garden* (1991), and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995). As Morris explains, many of the first-generation texts were composed in Eastgate Storyspace (a tool for hypertext writing), and published on disks marketed in book-like folders. Joyce's, Maultrop's, and Jackson's texts were, typically, narrative, with an element of interactivity. They were, as Hayles suggests, 'more like books than they were like second-generation electronic literature […] they operated by replacing one screen of text with another, much as a book goes from one page to another […] first-generation works left mostly untouched the unconscious assumptions that readers of books had absorbed through centuries of print. They were a brave beginning, but

characterise electronic literature today point to inherent affinities between this new mode of writing and the historic avant-garde:

> electronic literature is always about the now. The opposition to its own technical obsolescence gives electronic literature natural affinity to the historic avant-garde with its marginalization by, and opposition to commercial culture; its inherent rejection of markets as the arbiter of artistic value; its efforts to stretch the bounds of form and though. Its embrace, in other words, of its cyborg nature.[691]

Texts explored in this chapter most explicitly evoke earlier experiments in procedural writing, works of Fluxus or Ouilpo's investigations into artificial restrictions of literature. Earlier experiments in such programmable, constraint and rule-based poetry seem to have anticipated the possibilities of contemporary technologies and can be seen as an earlier iteration of contemporary coding practices, as discussed later in this chapter.

Seen as such, the genealogy of digital poetics can be traced to the twentieth century experimental poetic practice. But, to reiterate Strickland's point, electronic literature should not simply be considered an avant-garde by other, technological means. It includes a wide range of methods and approaches, exemplifying an aesthetic attitude that is inherently its own and a manifestation of the particular cultural-technological moment. It is a 'new staging,' in a new *technē* of poetry working, to paraphrase Peter Middleton, at the limits of the technologies of language, in a field of expanding technological possibilities.[692] What distinguishes electronic

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only a beginning' [Hayles, *Writing Machines*, 37]. The shift towards the second generation electronic writing is a result of the growth of the Internet and of the development of increasingly sophisticated programming software that allowed a move beyond Storyspace. As Morris explains, the second generation electronic literature relies on HTML, Java, and Flash, among others, programmes that combine verbal elements with capacity for incorporating and manipulating graphics, animation, and sound. 'Second generation electronic texts tend to be compressed, multi-layered, and time-driven,' Morris points out, 'closer to Mallarmé than Balzac, more like Dickinson than Frost, riders in a posse that includes such enduring outlaws as Stein's *Tender Buttons*, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the concrete and visual poetry of Augusto and Haraldo de Campos, Bob Brown's "Readies," John Cage's mesostics, and OULPO's "potential literature"' [Morris, 'New Media', 14].

[691] Steve Tomasula, 'Code Poetry and New-Media Literature', in *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, eds. Joe Bray, Alison Gibbons, and Brian McHale (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 484.

[692] Peter Middleton, *Distant Reading: Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), 145. Strickland's understanding of electronic literature as the 'next staging' builds on Peter Middleton's argument in *Distant Reading* (2005). For Middleton, there is a clear affinity between poetry and technology; 'poems work at the limits of technologies of language.' The role of code in electronic literature could be read as an example of poetic *technē*, alongside prosody, the use of print layout, the use of fonts, paper, or recordings. Middleton's 'distant reading' should not be confused with the notion of distant reading as used in digital humanities with references to big data approaches to machine reading (in contrast to human activity of close reading). While Middleton is interested in affinities of poetry and technology, and changing practices of reading in a very broad sense, digital humanities

literature today from earlier forms of experimental poetics is, according to Strickland, a certain sense of textual agency that derives from the technologies it relies on:

> digital poetry does things rather than says things [...] it often requires that one operate it like an appliance or play it as one would an instrument or a game. Sometimes, what it generates or displays is unpredictable and irreproducible – [...] it reflects, and reflects upon, worlds not by describing them, but by building them.[693]

This is an attitude grounded in an algorithmic logic and evocative of Burnham's systems aesthetics. As Andrew Goffey explains, there is a link between algorithm and action. A construction of any algorithm is a result of an implementation of a controlled series of steps to accomplish a task. As Goffey puts it, '[a]lgorithms do things, and their syntax embodies a command structure to enable this to happen.'[694] Constructed of algorithms, digital poetry relies on an execution of such processes. The commitment to doing things with words that characterises the digital environment presupposes a space particularly adequate to poetic exploration, a space of a turn. Poetry, or *poiēsis*, from the Greek term ποιέω, 'to make,' is inherently process driven – *poiēsis* is making, and, as Glazier observes, electronic space is a space of *poiēsis* – a space of making.[695] To address the models of writing and authoring texts that such context encourages, I focus here on acts of making, the process, rather that the thing made, or the text generated, to discuss the possibility of defining authorship in the context. Following Glazier, what is investigated here is not simply an idea of a digital work as an extension of a printed poem, but rather 'the idea of the digital poem as the process of thinking through this new medium, thinking through *making*.'[696]

This chapter, although dealing with digital poetics, does not propose a digital humanities project. Instead, it engages in aesthetics of speculative computing, as conceptualised by Johanna Drucker. Drucker differentiates between the field of digital humanities and what she describes as speculative computing. Digital humanities relies on the use of computational methods to engage with the materials of humanities. In a digital humanities project, data mining can be applied, for example, to attribute authorship, assess a characteristic semantic feature of historical language use, or even – to pick one titillating example – to rank letters between Emily Dickinson and Susan Huntington in terms of erotic language. [697] The analytic

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understanding of distant reading is limited to big data analysis. For an analysis of the latter, see Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013).

[693] Strickland, 'Poetry,' 224-225.

[694] Andrew Goffey, 'Algorithm', in *Software Studies*, ed. Matthew Fuller (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 17.

[695] Glazier, 5.

[696] Ibid, 6.

[697] See Matthew Kirchenbaum's applications of NORA project: Matthew Kirschenbaum, C. Plaisant, M. N. Smith, L. Auvil, J. Rose, B. Yu, and T. Clement, '*Undiscovered Public*

capabilities of new technologies provide new means of sourcing content and a model for ways of authoring and organising texts in novel ways. It is an attempt at expanding the field of reading practices as well as the possibilities of iterative writing to juxtapose quantitative information and hermeneutic approaches to text. While new possibilities are created with the introduction of big data into humanities projects, there is a sense of reductionism in the thinking that dominates digital humanities as a discipline. As Drucker puts it,

> if digital humanities activity were reduced to a single precept, it would be the requirement to disambiguate knowledge representation so that it operates within the codes of computational processing.[698]

The practices of digital humanities 'tend to lock users into procedural strictures. Once determined, a data structure or content model becomes a template restricting interpretation.'[699] Current methods dominant in the field are inflexible, deterministic, and driven by the pressures of technological exigencies. Speculative computing is formulated as a response to the state of digital humanities and an attempt at exploring the possibilities of finding space for humanities thinking in the field of computing. The speculative project is premised on the conviction that, to quote Drucker, 'logical, systematic knowledge representation [...] is not sufficient for the interpretation of imaginative artefacts.' [700] Recognising the divergence in the 'digital' and the 'humanities' thinking, the goal of speculative computing is to 'challenge the conceptual foundations of digital humanities through aesthetic provocation.'[701] What Drucker is particularly interested in is 'the event of interpretation in a digital environment'[702] where interpretation is always seen as a 'differential play.'[703] Such an approach resides in what Drucker describes as 'interpretation as deformance,' a model that 'torques the logical assumptions governing digital technology,'[704] and hence emerges as a manifestation of the sort of thinking that triggers an aesthetic turn.

Knowledge: Mining for Patterns of Erotic Language in Emily Dickinson's Correspondence with Susan Huntington (Gilbert) Dickinson', *Digital Humanities* conference*, 2006*, Paris. Sorbonne, 5th September 2006, 252-255.

[698] Johanna Drucker, *SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 5. Hereafter SL.

[699] Johanna Drucker and Bethany Nowviskie, 'Speculative Computing: Aesthetic Provocations in Humanities Computing', in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, eds. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (Blackwell Reference Online, 2004), accessed 17 July 2014, http://www.blackwellreference.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/subscriber/uid=42/tocnode?id=g9781405103213_chunk_g978140510321332. Hereafter SC.

[700] SC.

[701] SL, xi.

[702] Ibid, xiv.

[703] Ibid, 8.

[704] Ibid, 25.

As a field of inquiry preoccupied with epistemology and interpretation, speculative computing, similarly to digital humanities, inevitably evokes the theoretical questions of deconstruction, postmodernism, or critical cultural studies. Parallels are frequently drawn between, for example, hypertext and Deleuze's rhizomes, with digital text emerging as a new space of deconstructive thinking. Similar sensibilities are echoed in computer software and deconstructive writing, both characterised by the propensity for text defined by a condition of its mutability. For Landow, for example, new media today offer means of testing deconstructive theory.[705] 'When designers of computer software examine pages of *Glas* or *Of Grammatology*,' Landow writes, 'they encounter a digitalized, hypertextual Derrida: and when literary theorist examine *Literary Machines*,[706] they encounter a deconstructionist or poststructuralist Nelson.' For Landow, the similarities and recognitions emerge 'because over the past several decades literary theory and computer hypertext, apparently unconnected areas of inquiry, have increasingly converged.'[707] But, while a convergence of theory and computing is apparent, Jay David Bolter suggests, deconstruction only articulates what electronic writing is not; 'we still need a new literary theory to achieve a positive understanding of electronic writing.'[708] Speculative computing can be seen as an attempt at addressing the gap. However, as Drucker stresses,

> speculative computing is neither a rehash of poststructuralist theory nor an advanced version of either dialogic or dialectical approaches. Speculative computing is grounded in a serious critique of mechanistic, entity-driven approach to knowledge that is based on a distinction between subject and object [...] Speculative computing proposes a generative, not merely a critical attitude.[709]

Following Drucker, I am interested here not so much in the emergence of new electronic environments but in ways of 'thinking differently about how we know what we know'[710] that such technological change encourages: thinking differently at the Iterative turn, about technology as essence, about technology as a means of changing

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[705] Paul Delany and George P. Landow (eds.), *Hypermedia and Literary Studies* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 6.
[706] Landow refers here to Ted Nelson's *Literary Machines* (1980), now a formative text in software studies and hypertext scholarship. In *Literary Machines* Nelson offers an extensive theory of 'hypertext' and discusses his Project Xandau (first hypertext, funded by Nelson in 1960). Characteristically, *Literary Machines* is an attempt at transforming a traditional book into a hypertext itself. The text is non-linear and chapters can be read in any order [George P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalisation* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 1].
[707] Ibid, 1.
[708] Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hilldale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991), 166.
[709] SL, 21.
[710] Ibid, xii.

ontologies of creativity, and not technology as a data processing machine. I consider this chapter to be an exploration in alternative creative and critical avenues produced in a transitional technological moment. This chapter attempts to bring together concerns raised in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 in order to consider the preoccupations with iteration at the postproduction moment through a discussion of the technologies that incite the contemporary turn in aesthetics. The technological thinking foregrounded here offers a means of exploring opportunities to develop alternative ways of addressing familiar models of creative writing. As such, what I propose is an *aesthesis* of the Iterative turn, a means of engaging 'basic questions about knowledge and its representation, and interpretative acts and the values assigned to them within a cultural frame.'[711] While there is an inherent sense of cultural authority ascribed to computational media that stems from claims to objectivity and the formal logic in computational operations – in *mathesis* – this chapter focuses on the ways in which such objective forms of information and knowledge production provoke subjective interpretation and encourage experimentation with familiar models of creativity and authorship.

4.2. NICK MONTFORT AND STEPHANIE STRICKLAND, *SEA AND SPAR BETWEEN*

One text that lends itself particularly well to speculative thinking is Nick Montfort's and Stephanie Strickland's *Sea and Spar Between* (2010). As Montfort and Strickland describe it, *Sea and Spar* is a poetry generator, an example of code poetry, or computation poetics, to use the authors' term, but one that Montfort and Strickland consider 'as something that is related to, but distinct from, a typical digital humanities project.'[712] My interest in *Sea and Spar* resides in its speculative nature that is evoked in Montfort and Strickland's statement. Similar poetry generators rely on a set corpus and a programme that organises the textual data to generate poetry when run in a browser. Although code poetry and poetry generators are proliferating today, with work by J.R. Carpenter, Nathan Walker, Judd Morrissey, or María Mencía, to name just a few, I consider *Sea and Spar* particularly interesting and important because of the authors' dedication to forging a new model of creative practice and critical writing that can be associated with computing by speculative means. As such, *Sea and Spar* emerges as a critical and creative project that the same time that reverberates most explicitly with the overarching concerns of this thesis.

[711] Ibid, xiii.
[712] CTF.

Sea and Spar is iterative, both because of the computational logic behind it and the nature of its poetics. As Drucker explains, 'the very foundations of digital media [...] are procedural, generative, and iterative.'[713] As discussed in Chapter 1, Poster also points to the propensity for iteration implied in a digital text, always inherently dependent on its repetition. Hence, the digital environment offers a creative framework that encourages creativity by iterative means. *Sea and Spar*, and code generated poetry more broadly, can, in fact, be seen as a literal manifestation of Derrida's notion of writing, always inherently repeatable: 'the possibility of repeating and thus of identifying the marks is implicit in every code, making it into a network [...] that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable for a third, and hence every possible user in general.' For Derrida, 'to write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, [...] offering things and itself to be read and to be rewritten.'[714] The machine of *Sea and Spar* is the code. And code, as Alan Sondheim suggests, 'tends to repeat.'[715]

On the level of code, the text of *Sea and Spar* relies on processing of a data set, on creation of syntactical structures, and a relevant interface. As Montfort explained, it was originally written in Python but implemented in JavaScript and HTML with canvas, a format more easily engaged with online, hence more readily rewritten and repeated.[716] The code comprises a set of algorithms and commands; instructions that dictate the process of organising data to generate poetry. The data set here is formed from syllables, words, and short phrases. What makes the use of data of particular interest to my argument is the fact that the database of *Sea and Spar* is composed by iterative means, using language from Emily Dickinson's poems and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Unlike data mining projects, such as Flarf and Twistori, mentioned in Chapters 1 and 3 respectively, reliant on trawling the Internet for language, *Sea and Spar Between* engages with a finite dataset of Dickinson's and Melville's corpus, to create new poetry. 'This generator,' as Montfort explains, 'is deterministic [...] Instead of randomly drawing a poem from a distribution, *Sea and Spar Between* defines a very large fixed, two-dimensional space of stanzas.'[717] The literary data incorporated here does not comprise all of Dickinson's work and the entirety of Melville's novel. Only a selection of words and short phrases is

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[713] SC.
[714] SEC, 8.
[715] Alan Sondheim, 'Codeworld', in *Contemporary Poetics,* ed. Louis Armand (Evanson, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 289.
[716] Nick Montfort, 'XS, S, M, L: Creative Text Generators of Different Scales', *A Technical Report from The Thorpe Tank*, THORPE-12-02, January 2012, accessed, 25 April 2014, http://thorpe-tank.mit.edu.
[717] Montfort, 'XS,' 10.

incorporated into the code for the programme to combine into stanzas. The range of textual data was pre-selected by means of quantitative analysis of the source material to isolate an array of short phrases, primarily Melville's, common nouns from Dickinson's poems, and a selection of syllables that are used by either. As Strickland and Montfort explain, the words, phrases, or syllables were deemed typically Dickinson's or typically Melville's on the basis of tracking usage counts with frequency analysis tools. The stanzas derived from this dataset rely on clearly defined patterns set, as the authors explain, 'in order to recall or exaggerate stylistic elements of the source texts.'[718] Sample stanzas read:

how to withstand the huskpot course
        nailed to the spar
loop on
        artless rise and walk[719]

turn on
        for noteless is the sun
One rose one ear one mind one year
        pierless rise and sing – [720]

Montfort and Strickland describe the work as a means of defining 'a space of language populated by a number of stanzas comparable to the number of fish in the sea, around 225 trillion [...] [It] defines an immense lattice of stanzas.'[721] Each stanza can be identified and located by two coordinates, equivalents of latitude and longitude, ranging from 0:0 to 14992383:14992382.[722] 'Each time the program is run,' Montfort and Strickland explain, 'the reader is deposited at a random location

[718] CTF. This experience of randomness of the sea of stanzas and the related impossibility of a repetition implicit in the reading experience seem to mirror Melville's narrative. Like Melville's Captain Ahab, on his endless quest defined by an impossibility of a repeat encounter with the whale, Montfort and Strickland's reader struggles with the uncontrollable excess of text. Here an iteration of a source creates a text that defies straightforward iterations. It points to the characteristic structure of iteration, where any possibility of repetition is contingent on the impossibility of repetition of the same.
[719] Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland, *Sea and Spar Between*, accessed 12 August 2014, http://nickm.com/montfort_strickland/sea_and_spar_between/, 1898276:5422519.
[720] Montfort and Strickland, *Sea and Spar*, 10110332:7918144.
[721] CTF.
[722] As such, the text of *Sea and Spar* is always contained in a single plateau and hence can be described as Deleuze and Guattari's ideal book: 'the ideal for the book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority [...] on a single page, the same sheet' [Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2010), 10. Hereafter ATP].

[…] the reader is thus deposited "at sea," located in a poem.'[723] Here, the reading experience seems evocative of the Heideggerian 'throwness' (*Verfallen*), where every attempt at engaging with the text is an enactment of what Derrida (reading Heidegger) describes as 'the endless plunge,' one that 'throws you back onto the river-bank, on the brink of another possible immersion, *ad infinitum*.'[724] Programming *Sea and Spar* can be seen as an attempt at programming such an endless plunge, where the act of depositing the reader in the sea of text is defined by its correspondence to the *technē* of repetition, here defined as a calling-over to the other place. The logic of repetition in *Sea and Spar* always evokes other, iterated texts, and other places within the sea of stanzas, created by means of iteration. Here, the act of iteration is manifested as a reembodiment in a new space, and a new text, as a repetition of a repetition, and hence as a manifestation of the logic of the contemporary Iterative turn.

This model of repetition as throwness points to a sense of an impossibility of repetition in chance operations. Although the number of stanzas created by the generator is finite, and they are not, as Montfort stresses, arranged randomly, the sheer volume of text provided, and the speed at which stanzas succeed each other every time the mouse is moved, turns each experience of engaging with the text into a singular reading act. It is possible to arrive at a fixed location and identify a specific stanza by entering coordinates in the navigation box at the bottom of the browser window [Figure 46]. But to access the navigation box and control the text it is necessary to run the code first, it is necessary to allow for the initial, singular, random encounter with the text. Hence, the only possibility of repetition is, here, mechanical. As Derrida suggests, the recurrence of the chance event is characterised by an inherently mechanical repetition and 'marks the necessity of a contamination of any essence [of technology] by a generalized 'technology.'"[725] Here, to repeat is to engage with the technics of code, with the machine that enables an act of repetition.

As such, *Sea and Spar Between* is a commentary on the text and technologies of its production, it is a poetry machine rather than a poetry volume. To read the text is to operate the machine. It involves reading in an expanded field, often uncomfortable, overwhelming, and hard to follow, always defined by its textual excess. In *Sea and Spar* there is always more text to read, each stanza is always

[723] CTF.
[724] Jacques Derrida, 'Two words for Joyce', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, eds. Derrek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 148.
[725] Geoffrey Bennington, 'Derridabase', in *Jacques Derrida*, Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 312-13.

surround by a number of other stanza. Even identifying a specific fragment returns a plethora of text, the pre-selected stanza is always only experienced in a sea of text with no clear end or beginning. Every move of a mouse sets the text in motion, there is no way of attempting and purposely navigating the text without triggering what Montfort describes as 'a trembling, rapidly updating image.'[726] It creates an illusion of randomness that is, in fact, entirely determined by the machine. Echoes of Deleuze's view of text as 'language [that] trembles from head to toe'[727] are evoked here. For Deleuze, stuttering – a manifestation of language that trembles – is a means of 'poetic comprehension of language,'[728] a manifestation of style, where stuttering is not associated with one's speech but rather with making the language stutter. Deleuze's writer – and similarly Montfort and Strickland – is a stutterer in language for whom 'words no longer exist independently of the stutter which selects and links them together through itself.'[729] In *Sea and Spar*, the act of authorship involves curatorial decisions that trigger stutter, setting the syntax of code in the process of becoming a stuttering, trembling text. And, according to Deleuze, it is in the stutters that innovation and change take place; 'creative stuttering is what makes language grow.'[730] It is the stutter that opens space for alternative means of conceptualising authorship for code generated poetics. Driven by the logic of Deleuzian stutter as a space of creative exploration, the engagement with quantitative analysis emerges here as a tool of new poetic possibilities, raising novel literary questions rather than a complete project in its own right. Here, data analysis is transformed into a method of speculative computing rather than an extension of the digital humanities. In Sondheim's words, it 'extends language into new unchartered territories.'[731] A characteristic conflation of computation and poetics emerges, pointing to a clear correlation between code, its iterative nature, and the approach to creative writing that interests Strickland and Montfort, with the dynamics of iterative technology echoed in the poetry it generates.

[726] CTF.
[727] Gilles Deleuze, 'He stuttered', in *Essays, Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 109.
[728] Ibid, 109.
[729] Ibid, 107.
[730] Ibid, 111.
[731] Sondheim, 'Codeworld', 289.

FIGURE 46: NICK MONTFORT AND STEPHANIE STRICKLAND, *SEA AND SPAR BETWEEN*

The fact that the text is executed in Java is not insignificant here. In explanatory notes to the code (a text in itself important, as discussed later in this chapter), Strickland and Montfort list all files that comprise the sea_spar.js, the JavaScript that runs *Sea and Spar*. Alongside index.html, reading.html, and style.css, the authors include canvastext.js – a file containing the font. The canvas is not created by Montfort and Strickland but instead appropriated, with minor alterations, from a script available in the public domain.[732] Such borrowing, altering, and reusing existing code, to create new content is a standard code writing practice. Code is written to be used, made accessible to encourage its appropriations. Unused, it becomes obsolete and fails to serve its purpose. Code, then, should be seen as an inherently networked text, one that, to borrow from Bruno Latour, 'elicits networks of actors,'[733] always contingent on the possibility of its iteration in a networked

[732] CTF.

[733] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 129. Thinking about texts as networks defined as such is a foundational notion behind Latour's Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). ANT is concerned with simultaneously mapping relations that are material, i.e. between things, and semiotic, i.e. between concepts. This theory is an attempt at defining how such complex material-semiotic systems operate as a whole, an approach also evoked in Montfort and Strickland's project. While in Latour's approach equal agency is assigned to human and non-human actors, thinking about writing code in *Sea and Spar* is primarily focused on human activity, distributed, networked, open access, but never purely mechanistic. However, the conflation of natural and computer languages so prominent in Montfort and Strickland's approach can be seen as an extension of the ANT logic. What is of particular relevance in the context of my discussion is the possibility inscribed in Latour's network of the constant production of meaning that comes from the inside rather than from the outside of a text that, just like *Sea and Spar* is a dynamic entity, a performance perhaps (as discussed later in this chapter) and a source of its own critique. As Latour puts it: 'each of points in the text may become a bifurcation, an event, or the origin of a new translation [...] It qualifies its

environment. jQuery is as a particularly telling example, illustrative of thinking behind modes of authorship propagated by the code writing community. jQuery is a free, open source library of JavaScript that provides fragments of pre-written code samples. As Nathan Walker explains, while some developers write in Java, most engage in what Walker describes as 'patch writing,' using and reusing code already available in databases such as jQuery. 'It is rare,' Walker stresses, 'that you would write from scratch.'[734] What emerges is an alternative model of ownership for open source culture, not bound to individualism but perceived in a pluralistic manner. Here, the conditions of creative production are established in a collaborative process, regardless of the familiar property models. Creative practice in the open source environment does not rely on categories of originality in copyright sense, i.e. on the author as the origin of a work, but on an open, networked, participatory process of production. Here, the work does not necessarily have a single source but is always a result of the coming together of a complex actor-network of interlinked agencies.

Characteristically, the *Sea and Spar* code is licenced as copyrighted but free software. It is set up as such, Montfort and Strickland explain, so that 'authors and programmers can take from it anything they find useful' in the same manner that the two authors appropriated and remixed *Moby Dick* and Dickinson's poetry.[735] The free software is offered, to cite Montfort, 'with the hope that poets and programmers will use some or all of it.'[736] There is not only a permissiveness but an expectation of reuse, reappropriation, and recyclying that is inherent in the models of authorship assumed in the code writing community. This iterative, open source thinking also translates, I suggest, into a characteristic approach towards authorship and creativity with respect to code generated poetics. The same attitude towards writing by means of rewriting is taken on the level of technical and creative outputs, with laws of code transforming into laws of creativity broadly conceived. Creative writing by means of coding, in turning into a form of open source poetics that not only allows for but is contingent on exchange and remix of material, foregrounds contemporary exigencies of arriving at alternative thinking about models of creative production and originality. Here the figure of the author is reconceptualised as Latour's actor-mediator of iterated content. In this context, iteration both on the level of code itself as well as with respect to incorporated data sets, becomes a standard practice of computer generated writing

objectivity, that is, the ability of each actor to make other actors do unexpected things [...] A network is not what is represented in the text, but what readies the text to take relay of actors as mediators' [Latour, 128-30].

734 Nathan Walker, 'Transitional Materialities and the Performance of JavaScript', *Performance Research*, 18.5 (2014), 64.

735 CTF.

736 Montfort, 'XS', 11.

rather than a transgressive experiment in appropriation.[737] This is writing in a Derridean sense, where

> every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written [...] can be *cited*, put between quotation marks: in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable.[738]

For Derrida, 'the possibility of repeating [...] is implicit in every code, making it into a network [...] that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable [...] for every possible user.'[739] This possibility of further iterations is inscribed into the code of *Sea and Spar Between*. As Montfort and Strickland stress:

> if someone was to replace our words and phrases with new text, a generator with a similar appearance and similar functioning, but with a new vocabulary, would be defined. That is, it is practically possible to create a new generator a remix or appropriation of this one, by replacing only the data in this section. If this is done, and the code is not otherwise modified, the system will assemble language in the same way, but it will work on different language.[740]

The iterability of texts in a digital environment differs, however, from the iterative nature of an analogue text in that the digital source is never fixed and stable but always changing, always fluid. Writing in the digital domain always produces a text that is unfinished. The model of writing that Montfort and Strickland put forward

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[737] Unsurprisingly, iteration and remixing are particularly prominent among the code poetics community. Going beyond an interest in reusing open source code or literary texts as data, remixes of poetry generators themselves are currently proliferating. Nick Montfort's *Taroko Gorge* (2009) is a good example. Like *Sea and Spar Between*, *Taroko Gorge* is a poetry generator created as a result of Montfort's visit to Taroko Gorge National Park in Taiwan. Since its publication, the *Taroko Gorge* generator has generated a number of new poetry generators created by appropriating and altering Montfort's code, e.g. Scott Rottenberg's *Tokyo Garage* (2009), a poetry generator about Tokyo; J.R. Carpenter's *Gorge* (2010), a piece of gastronomic excess, 'on food, consumption, decadence, and desire' [J.R. Carpenter, 'Gorge', *Luclysoap.com*, 26 May 2010, accessed 02 July 2014, http://luckysoap.com/lapsuslinguae/2010/05/gorge/]; 'Along the Briny Beach' and 'Whisper Wire', both also by Carpenter; and works by Maria Engberg, Mark Sample, Eric Snodgrass, and Talan Memmott, among others. Carpenter's appropriations are particularly interesting here as they form an ongoing creative exchange between Montfort and Carpenter. In 2008, Montfort created three short Python programmes, 'The Two'. The first one was modified by Carpenter into 'Excerpts from the Chronicles of Pookie & JR' (2009) and subsequently used to generate texts for her book, *Generation[s]* (2010) (the epigraph to *Generation[s]* reads: 'Only one rule: no new text' [J.R. Carpernter, *Generation[s]*, (Vienna: Traumawien, 2010]. The third was a cooperative project, engaging Montfort and Carpenter and building on the first. Self-conscious about the models of authorship that define the field of code poetics, Andrew Plotkin's 'Argot Ogre, OK!', anther appropriation of *Taroko*, poses a meta-textual commentary on the proliferating remixes of Montfort's generator in a form of a meta-remix. Potkin's generator automatically remixes all of its appropriations. The source code, with Plotkin's explanatory notes, is developed in a format evocative of Montfort and Strickland's CTF [Andrew Plotkin, source of http://eblong.com/zarf/argot-ogre-ok.html, 27 September 2011, accessed, 27 September 2014, http://eblong.com/zarf/argot-ogre-ok.html].

[738] SEC, 12.

[739] Ibid, 8.

[740] CTF.

evokes the iterability of the machine as 'a sort of machine [...] offering things and itself to be read and to be rewritten.'[741] This juxtaposition of the inherent alterity of text in the digital environment and the process of authoring a new text assembled by the system that Montfort and Strickland point to, should be seen, I suggest, as a foundation of thinking about the dynamic of iterative authorship of code poetics.

4.3. WRITING: AN ASSEMBLAGE

The reference to writing by means of 'assembling language' is significant and evocative of what I see as a broader tendency in digital poetics, where writing takes the form of a Deleuzian assemblage. An assemblage is an arrangement, or a process of arranging and fitting together, from French *agencement*, Deleuze and Guattari's original term as used in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In line with Deleuze and Guattari's argument, an assemblage should be understood as 'every constellation of singularities [...] selected, organised, stratified – in such a way as to converge.'[742] As Graham Livesey explains, assemblages, as conceived of by Deleuze and Guattari, are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new way of functioning.[743] An assemblage is contingent. It undergoes constant alterations. An assemblage – and, similarly, a code generated poem – emerges from an arrangement of elements that form an entity that can be diagrammed. Here, the diagram can be likened to the code itself. It is an explanation that charts the arrangement of the assemblage, a map of the function of the assemblage. A characteristic relationship between the code and the text it generates emerges from this conceptual framework, where code can be thought of as a map and the generated text as a related plateau.

The map, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, is a means of fostering connections:

> the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions, it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation.[744]

The code, then, is the map, one that in its fluid, open source, iterative multiplicity gives directions to and generates a plateau or the interface. A map, Delezue and Guattari explain, is that which has to be constructed and produced and, similarly to a

[741] SEC, 8.
[742] ATP, 448.
[743] Graham Livesey, 'Assemblage', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 18.
[744] ATP, 13.

Java file, it is always reversible and modifiable. A map, and like a map, code, is always in a process of becoming – becoming the map, and becoming the plateau that it generates ad infinitum. As Delezue and Guattari describe the concept, a plateau is a multiplicity connected to other multiplicities, or, perhaps, a space of the immense lattice of stanzas that Montfort and Strickland's generator returns. Each plateau, and similarly, the stanzas of *Sea and Spar*, 'can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau,'[745] as a plateau typically has no culmination or termination points. The 'trembling, rapidly updating image'[746] of *Sea and Spar* embodies a plateau understood as 'a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities.'[747] What Montfort and Strickland's plateau forms, then, is an assemblage of fragmented stanzas governed by a logic of code, or a map, an arrangement that forms a rhizomatic and fragmentary whole.

But for Deleuze and Guattari an assemblage should not be seen as a fixed arrangement of elements that constitute it. Rather, similarly to an open source code and related poetic forms, 'assemblages are in a constant state of variation, are themselves constantly subject to transformation.'[748] Their mutability contributes to an open system, as Massumi describes it, constantly metamorphosed, constantly becoming. Literature seen as an assemblage (and Deleuze and Guattari do recognise it as such) is a space of emergence and experimentation, a space of a turn ('the map [...] is entirely oriented towards experimentation').[749] This is writing that is 'always a measure of something else. Writing [that] has nothing to do with signifying, it has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.'[750] As Manuel DeLanda puts it, an assemblage is a 'space of possibility,' it contains potential for novel transformations.[751] As such, there are inherent affinities between a formulation of an assemblage and a possibility of literary innovation. An assemblage typically brings about new means of expression, new realisations, and organisations, it is, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, 'a veritable invention.'[752] For Simon O'Sullivan, it brings about the possibility of something new.[753] 'The assemblage,' according to Livesey, 'is

[745] Ibid, 24.
[746] CTF.
[747] ATP, 24.
[748] Ibid, 90.
[749] Ibid, 13.
[750] Ibid, 5.
[751] Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006), 14.
[752] ATP, 447.
[753] Thinking of code understood as such firmly positions Montfort and Strickland's project in the Deleuzian framework. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Montfort and Strickland posit an attempt at reconfiguring perceptions of reality in a creative manner, offering tools and strategies to help construct creativity differently (for a discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's

destined to produce a new reality, by making numerous, often unexpected connections.'[754] This commitment to innovative thinking foregrounded in a system of creating by means of assembling is of particular significance here. It is echoed in Montfort and Strickland's approach towards their system of writing in *Sea and Spar* as a speculative exploration in possibilities of arriving at a new discourse for a new creative environment. It becomes a paradigm of writing for the Iterative turn.[755]

The Java file operates as a form of an assemblage: it assembles the data, i.e. Dickinson's and Melville's text, the code, both Montfort's and the appropriated fragments, to create one, coherent script. But the Java file that generates *Sea and Spar* is also an attempt at forming an assemblage of discourses, combining the language of code, with a reflective critical commentary to arrive at a hybrid model of writing that conflates the attributes of the technological and artistic investigation. Characteristically, the java script of *Sea and Spar* was originally published with brief technical comments, to offer instructions and assistance for anyone who might want to reuse and modify the code. This is a standard practice and coding languages allow for an inclusion of comments that are not readable by a machine, and hence do not affect the execution of code. In HTML, for example, writing anything within '<!— TEXT –>' will be legible in the html file but will not return any results when the code is run. Similarly, in Java, comments are demarcated by any of the following: '/*,' '/**,' or '//.' The *Sea and Spar* code, published in 2010 as 'cut to fit the toolspun course: Discussing Creative Code in Comments', builds on the original programme and the comment function of coding languages to arrive at a potential, speculative model of criticism of literary works written in code. 'cut to fit' is a hybrid form of an essay, written in the Java file itself but published in a journal. By utilising the possibilities of the comment function, Montfort and Strickland include an expanded range of notes, some practical – the familiar instructions on the technicalities of code; some reflective – taking a form of an essay addressing general issues of code poetics, *Sea and Spar* specifically, as well as the kind of critical thinking that the project encourages. All comments are placed between the lines of the actual, functional code that generates *Sea and Spar*. Here the human activity of reading takes place, literally,

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alternative strategies of conceptualising reality see Simon O'Sullivan, *Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[754] Livesey, 19.

[755] This is a logic evocative of earlier preoccupations of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry. As Barrett Watten explains, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E identify the need for certain ways of making poetry, 'they propose an interpretative context (aesthetic, cultural, political) by which it can be read; and they devise reading strategies for new forms of poetry. The genre of poetry is in this way predicated on the positivity of its reference, poetry, as it explores parallels of meaning and construction. Poetics at the same time involves a distancing or renegotiation of the practice of poetry' [Watten, 339].

between the lines of the machine readable text. In this approach, Montfort and Strickland foreground the increasingly blurring boundaries between artificial and natural languages by replacing the familiar '.doc' file with a '.js' file.

The interpretation written into the code is inherently speculative, characterised by the recognition that 'interpretation takes place from inside a system, rather than from outside.' As Drucker explains,

> speculative approaches make it possible for subjective interpretation to have a role in shaping the processes, not just the structures, of digital humanities. When this occurs, outcomes go beyond descriptive, generative, or predictive approaches to become speculative. New knowledge can be created.[756]

In its speculative approach, the project is an attempt at creating, to borrow Drucker's terms, 'parameter-shifting,' 'open-ended,' 'inventive' capabilities of writing and criticism,[757] reconceptualised for the Iterative turn. The method is applied, Montfort and Strickland explain, 'to open up new literary questions and to identify new poetic possibilities, not, for instance, to determine authorship or support any kind of statistical analysis.'[758] Here code writing turns into a form of speculative, critical writing. 'cut to fit' is an attempt at creating a space where the natural language and language of code both carry meaning but where code assumes significance not limited to its functionality. There is a characteristically Oulipian attitude expressed in this approach. For Oulipo the potential of constraint is more important than the constraint itself and, most importantly, 'a text written according to a constraint describes the constraint.' [759] Similarly, the self-reflexive nature of writing code and discussing its nature at the same time is at the core of Montfort and Strickland's project. Whether executed on paper or in a Java file, the text here is dependent on an application of an algorithmic constraint, by devising and implementing a system simultaneously, creating and reflecting on the creative process at the same time. Seen as such, the contemporary technology, again, realises as an increasingly ubiquitous practice what earlier avant-gardes experimented with in abstract terms. This return to, and appropriations of, the constraint as a methods of experimental creative writing

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[756] SC.
[757] Ibid.
[758] CTF.
[759] Jacques Roubaund, 'Introduction: The Oulipo and Combinatorial Art', in *Oulipo Compendium*, eds. Harry Mathews and Alastair Brotchie (London: Atlas, 2005), 42. Constraint as a writing technique is, as Jan Baetens and Jean-Jacques Poucel explain, 'a self-chosen rule (i.e. different from the rules that are imposed by the use of a natural language or those of convention); it is also a rule that is used systematically throughout the work [...] both as a compositional and a reading device. Constraints are not ornaments: for the writer, they help generate the text; for the reader, they help make sense of it' [Jan Baetens and Jean-Jacques Poucel, 'Introduction: The Challenge of Constraint', *Poetics Today*, 30.4 (2009), 613].

today is a hybrid iteration of the earlier avant-garde methods and attitudes, of the characteristically Oulipian emphasis on *poeisis* as making or building. Here, again, in a manner characteristic for the Iterative turn, an attitude, reiterated, becomes form.

Understood as such, *Sea and Spar* emerges as an autopoietic avant-garde project,[760] a system capable of maintaining itself, defining its own actions and behaviours and, hence, based on the production not of (digital) objects but of a new kind of language. It articulates itself in such a way as to suggest its commitment to shifting perspective that also requires a change in writing and established models of authorship. As an exercise in autopoeisis, 'cut to fit' offers a broader statement on current critical approaches to analysing codework. Although the juxtaposition of writing code and writing poetry is now an established creative paradigm, the discourses about experiments in code poetics tend to make a distinction between the operational language and the poetic language. As Mark C. Marino stresses, 'while we examine programming architecture and admire modularity and efficiency, the study of computer code does not currently emphasise interpretation, the search for and production of meaning.'[761] The latter is reserved for humanistic fields of inquiry, engaged with the natural language in a subjective, often ambiguous manner. 'Even when aesthetics intervene,' Marino stresses, 'they come in a form of calls for stylistic clarity for more efficient modification and development.'[762] Coding understood as a digital machine designed solely to generate an interface is antithetical to autopoietic thinking; it is, as Jerome McGann argues, an allopoietic system.[763] Montfort and Strickland's project recognises the limitations of such a binary approach to transform the logic of code and of poetry, both converging in a subversive, generative autopoietic machine.[764] Thinking speculatively, their project is, to borrow from Drucker, 'the

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[760] The notion of autopoeisis has typically been applied in systems theory (briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter) and hence is a manifestation of a broader shift towards process rather than object oriented inquiries key to my discussion of writing code.
[761] Mark C. Marino, 'Critical Code Studies', *Electronic Book Review*, 4 December 2006, accessed 14 May 2014, http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/codology.
[762] Ibid.
[763] Jerome McGann, 'Marking Texts of Many Dimensions' in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, eds. Susan Schreibman, Raymond Georg Siemens, and John M. Unsworth (Blackwell Reference Online, 2004), accessed 19 September 2014, http://www.blackwellreference.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/subscriber/uid=42/tocnode?id=g9781405103213_chunk_g9781405103213 19. While autopoietic forms derive meaning from within themselves, allopoeitic forms take their meaning and from outside themselves.
[764] I borrow the notion of the autopoietic machine from H.R. Maturana's and F.J. Varela's, *Autopoeisis and Cognition* (1980). As the authors explain, an autopoeitic machine 'is a machine organised [...] as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realise the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realisation as such a network'

substantive manifestation in poetic forms [that] shows the workings of the mechanisms as it enacts, unfolds.'[765] In *Sea and Spar* the focus is not on code that is literature or literature made of code, but rather on code as a cultural text in its own right that requires its own methods of interpretation, and a new set of categories of authorship, creativity, and originality. The creation of a hybrid discourse turns into a Deleuzian becoming of language as becoming other, not a discourse of code or criticism but rather a completely new language. 'cut to fit' is an exploration in writing in what Delezue and Guattari describe as a chromatic language, not formed out of a cipher or unfamiliar code but rather one that 'placed a public language system of variable in a state of variation.'[766] The signifying structure of *Sea and Spar* can be seen as a manifestation of chromaticism. Its elements, like elements of a chromatic language, are placed in continuous variation, altered, iterated, and inherently iterable, 'in an operation that will perhaps give rise to new distinctions.'[767] The creative process here evokes an exploration in possibilities of transformation – the possibilities of the turn.

For Montfort and Strickland, 'the most useful critique is a new constitution of elements.'[768] The reconceptualisation of source code to incorporate critical comments opens possibilities for a development of not just individual texts but a new discursive field of criticism, where comments can be edited, manipulated, deleted or added not just by the authors themselves, but by other authors, critics, editors, or curators bringing forth new assemblages. Such practice significantly problematises any possibility of thinking about poetics in line with traditional categories of singular authorship. It produces, to cite Montfort and Strickland, 'a widely distributed new constitution'[769] that should be conceptualised according to similar, distributed models of authorship that are yet to be formulated, at least within literary studies. Here, authorship relies on expanded concepts of agency (such as Actor-Network Theory) to contribute to a concept of creativity that becomes a form of social interaction in an open source environment, based on a view of shared textual ownership that challenges the institution of the author and copyright.

[H.R.Maturana and F.J.Varela, *Autopoeisis and Cognition: The Realisation of the Living* (Boston: D.Reidell Publishing Company, 1980), 78].

[765] SC.
[766] ATP, 107.
[767] Ibid, 108.
[768] CTF.
[769] Ibid.

4.4. WRITING IN A STATE OF AUTHORSHIP

There is a tendency – one also exhibited in this chapter – to talk of 'reading' code, and of 'writing' it that grows out of an inherent association of the language of programming with natural languages and their systems of signification. But there is also something paradoxical about writing a critique of code as a traditional essay, in both language and form that do not accommodate the signifying system of code itself. Montfort and Strickland's project can be seen as a means of addressing this paradox. There is a danger, the authors seem to suggest, in applying the familiar categories of writing (of poetry, of code) to code poetics, a danger of falling into a form techno-determinist theory of poetics. Neither simply a manifestation of code nor a straightforward poetic project, code poetry is an attempt at drawing attention to the thresholds of languages that constitute both. It is a form that invites reflection on implications of the overlap of technology and literature for notions of authorship, creativity, and originality that emerge. Monftort and Strickland's approach adopted in the 'cut to fit' acknowledges the challenges of conceptualising contemporary models of creativity and authorship and grows out of a recognition of the emergent signifying system that contributes to poetic thinking at the postproduction moment. Montfort's and Strickland is not, I suggest, a contribution to proliferating debates on whether it is possible to read code, or interpret it in a manner similar to natural languages.[770] Instead, it is an experiment in critical methods of approaching this expanded poetic field.

What emerges is a form of 'heuretics' of reading and writing in the digital environment. Devised by Gregory L. Ulmer, 'heuretics' is a means of manifesting the logic of invention, it enables assimilation of theory into the humanities by means of artistic experiment. While heuretics 'functions at the same level of generality as "hermeneutics,"'[771] the focus of heuretics is on the making, on the process, rather than on interpretation that is of primary interest to hermeneutic thinking. 'Heuretics,' Ulmer explains, 'contributes to what Barthes referred to as "the return of the poetician" – one who is concerned with how a work is *made*.'[772] Primarily interested in the making of an electronic text, Montfort and Strickland can be considered such poeticians engaging in a heuretic project. Their concerns, similarly to Ulmer's, do not conclude with 'analysis or comparative scholarship' but rather are explored in a

[770] Key arguments in the debate tend to be published by *Electronic Book Review*. Contributors include Mark C. Marino, John Cayley, Rita Raley, Florian Cramer.
[771] Gregory Ulmer, *Heuretics: The Logic of Invention* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 3. Hereafter H.
[772] Ibid, 4.

manner characteristic of heuretic project, 'in preparation for the design of a rhetoric/poetic leading to the production of new work.'[773] The same commitment to a formulation of a new, speculative discourse that is also generative, pervades Ulmer's and Montfort and Strickland's projects, with Ulmer's thinking offering a possible framework for interpreting the logic of invention behind *Sea and Spar* as a process of a turn.[774] By favouring questions of making over those of meaning, Montfort and Strickland's experiment emerges as a self-contained and self-reflective record of the dynamic of invention, recounting the method of the work in the process of making it, leading to its formulation as a rhetoric and a poetics at the same time, evocative of similar attempts at writing and theorising iteration by iterative means in Goldsmith's work. In a heuretic gesture, Montfort and Strickland use the method that they are inventing while inventing it.[775]

Computer-mediated environments seen as a space of heuretic exploration facilitate what Bill Seaman describes as states of authorship.[776] Seaman's notion is grounded in processes of mediated interactivity and user participation as a form of assumed authorship, where user engagement enables performance under a temporary state of authorship. But I would like to suggest that such thinking about authorship can also be adopted to describe creative paradigms behind code poetics and iterative writing more broadly. The state of authorship is a result of what Seaman describes as 'inter-authorship,' an interaction with operative elements of a system, similar to a network of texts, here the pre-written Java file, texts of Dickinson's and Melville's that constitute *Sea and Spar*. Creating in a state of authorship is not a straightforward, singular act of authorship that produces a text but rather a conceptual and at the same time generative dialogue with textual objects negotiating disparate structures of signification, somewhat evocative of Gysin and Burroughs's Third Mind model. Relationships of texts and authors that contribute to a creative process under the state of authorship can be described as rhizomatic, to remain in the

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[773] Ibid.

[774] Ulmer's engagement with theory is also important here: 'the relevant question for heuretic reading is not one guiding criticism (according to the theories of Freud, Marx, Wittgenstein, Derrida, and others: What might be the *meaning* of an existing work?) but one guiding a generative experiment: Based on a given theory, how might *another* text be composed?' [H, 5]. This is an approach that echoes the assumptions of Drucker's speculative project, applied here as a framework for understanding the relationship between text, theory and technology; 'neither as a rehash of poststructuralist theory nor an advanced version of either dialogic or dialectical approaches [...] a generative, not merely critical attitude' [SL, 21].

[775] This statement is a paraphrase of Ulmer's claim: 'Part of working heuretically is to use the method that I am inventing while I am inventing it' [H, 17].

[776] Bill Seaman, 'Emergent constructions: re-embodied intelligence within recombinant poetic networks', in *Digital Creativity: A Reader*, eds. Colin Beardon and Lone Malmborg (London: Routledge, 2010), 140.

Deleuzeian framework, and evocative of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the notion of the *state*. Rhizomes and, similarly, writing at the Iterative turn, oppose any possibility of an idiosyncratic, centralised authorship. Thinking of writing as rhizomatic creates a possibility of moving beyond the singular, Romantic model of authorship, towards an open source, distributed system of writing. In any rhizomatic structure, any point can be connected to anything other; code can converge with critical literary discourse, fragments of Dickinson's poetry with Melville's text, Goldsmith's criticism with LeWitt's manifestos, or, for that matter, with any other text. A rhizome, as O'Sullivan puts it, 'implies a contact and movement between different milieus and registers, between areas that are usually thought of as distinct and discrete.'[777] For Deleuze and Guattari, 'the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states.'[778] A rhizomatic form of authorship is non-hierarchical, governed by principles of connectivity that allow for the exchange, collaboration, and appropriation so characteristic of code writing communities, but echoed in all models of iterative writing discussed in this thesis. In a rhizomatic system of textual relations all elements are interconnected but also interchangeable. Substituting fragments of code, or the corpus of Dickinson's poetry, for another code or another poetic text is possible, and can be done by anyone, in line with Deleuze and Guattari, 'defined only by their state at a given moment – such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronised without a central agency.'[779] Writing by such collaborative, networked means should be seen as inherently creative. 'It can produce,' O'Sullivan suggests, 'surprising compatibilities and novel synthesis [...] the making of connections in this sense might be understood as a key modality of creativity in general.'[780]

In a state of authorship, what is created, perhaps, is neither literature nor code but a *statement* in Foucault's understanding of the term. Foucault's statement is 'that which enables [...] groups of signs to exist, and enables [...] groups or forms to become manifest.'[781] To return to the Deleuzian analogy, the statement can be seen as that of a map, that which enables and generates a plateau, the code of *Sea and Spar Between*

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[777] O'Sullivan, 17.
[778] ATP, 23.
[779] Ibid, 19. Such understanding of structures of authorship and creativity as rhizomatic stands in direct opposition to what Deleuze and Guattari describe as aborescent systems; hierarchical, with singular centres of significance and subjectification [ATP, 18], as manifested in traditional, established models of authorship.
[780] O'Sullivan, 17.
[781] AK, 88.

that triggers the interface of poetry. 'The statement,' Foucault explains, 'is that which situates [...] meaningful units in a space in which they breed and multiply,'[782] in the sea of stanzas that Montfort and Strickland's generator produces. The coexistence of the code and its interface is, then, governed by the logic of a statement, defined by 'the relations between an object language [that of the interface] and one that defines the rules [the language of code].'[783] But these do not exist in a simple binary relationship, they do not operate as two separate, disparate textual entities. It is their interdependence that is crucial to defining the creative paradigm behind poetry generators such as *Sea and Spar*, and, I suggest, can be explained most explicitly by defining the nature of writing digital poetics as writing Foucauldian statements. Code and its interface remain always inherently linked and co-dependent. Code is always inscribed into an interface, the interface always relies on iterations of the code. The two can be thought of, perhaps, as a manifestation of a differential repetition of the same, always connected, always 'part of a network of statements.'[784] For Foucault,

> every statement is specified in this way [...] a statement always belongs to a series of a whole, always plays a role among other statements [...] There is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not surrounded by a field of coexistences, effects of series and succession, a distribution of functions and roles.[785]

A statement, seen as a networked system of generating meaning, emerges as an enunciative system particularly fitting the algorithmic, networked digital environment that determines the authorial, structures of computer generated poetics.

But thinking about writing in terms of Foucauldian statements where code poetics is concerned also needs to take into consideration Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation of the notion. As Brian Massumi points out, Deleuze and Guattari's 'statement' closely follows Foucault's.[786] But what Deleuze and Guattari's approach foregrounds, is a distributed, multiple nature of networked environments. For Deleuze and Guattari,

> there are no individual statements [...] Every statement is a product of a mechanic assemblage, in other words, of collective agents of enunciation (take "collective agents" to mean not peoples or societies but multiplicities).[787]

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[782] Ibid, 100.
[783] Ibid, 99.
[784] Ibid.
[785] Ibid.
[786] Brian Massumi, 'Notes on the Translation', in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuumu, 2010), xix.
[787] ATP, 42.

Evocative of the dynamic, the range of texts, be it poetry or code, comprising *Sea and Spar* calls to mind Deleuze and Guatari's principle of multiplicity. The assemblage of discourses here is not a commentary on the texts appropriated. Instead, the amalgamation of voices and different forms of writing – the multiple – is also substantive. A text formulated by iterative means assumes an independent, singular status, but its singularity is always multiple, always networked, always distributed. *Sea and Spar* embodies an assemblage that characteristically does not rely on a relationship between the elements that comprise it as its subjects or objects. Instead, it emerges as a result of a rhizomatic network of multiplicities, or 'multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single assemblage, operating in the same assemblage.'[788] In other words, the corpus of Dickinson's poetry used by Montfort and Strickland forms a multiplicity, the data mined text of Melville's *Moby Dick* is a multiplicity, the code written by Montfort and Strickland and the appropriated canvas should be seen as such as well; each multiple and substantive but at the same time forming a single assemblage of *Sea and Spar*. As a manifestation of this multiplicity, the structure of authorship becomes problematic and defies any possibility of its unambiguous assignation. Rather it has to be conceived of as a product of a collective agent of enunciation. An author of a statement is not an individual, as Foucault comments. A statement 'is a particular, vacant place that may [...] be filled by different individuals.' Governed by a dynamic so characteristic of open source writing, 'it varies – or rather it is variable enough to be either, to persevere, unchanging, through several sentences, or to alter with each one.'[789]

But such an assertion removes the author working in line with the open source principles from their work. In the context, the output is only considered as a product of a mechanic assemblage with no determined authorship. Within such a framework, the categories of authorship fall back on themselves and distributed, networked texts turn into authorless works. One way to avoid such superfluous thinking is by drawing a distinction between authorship and states of authorship as a possible framework for conceptualising the collective agency behind *Sea and Spar* without devaluing the status of the open source author. Writing in the state of authorship is a condition of creativity that assumes a break from familiar models of literary production to arrive at a new system of enunciation as a possible logic of the Iterative turn. In an assemblage, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, 'operation of significance and proceedings of subjectification [...] are distributed, attributed, and assigned [...] the collective assemblage is always [...] the constellation of voices, concordant or not,

[788] Ibid, 38.
[789] AK, 95

from which I draw my voice.'[790] Writing as a form of assemblage enables an inherently iterative text to be actuated. Writing as an assemblage is writing in a state of authorship, where writing takes place, to return to Montfort and Strickland, in 'a widely distributed new constitution,'[791] where authorship is always distributed and always iterative.

4.5. JAVA: A PERFORMANCE

If authorship of code is assembled, variable, distributed, and understood on the basis of networks of co-existences that contribute to creation of statements in a state of authorship, then any possibility of formulating a model of authorship cannot rely on its assignation. Instead, it can only be understood on the basis of actualisation of statements, on the basis of what the statements do. As Foucault puts it, statements 'can exist and are analysable only to the extent that these [...] have been 'enunciated.''[792] Running code, a process of transforming the JavaScript of *Sea and Spar* into its interface, can be thought of, I suggest, as an iterative act of enunciation. Enunciation, as Foucault explains, takes place when a group of signs is emitted. In other words, a code is enunciated when it is run, repeating the code every time the JavaScript prints an interface, or emits the signs that form the stanzas of *Sea and Spar*, assembled out of a data set. It is only when the act of enunciation takes place that the code generated poem can be analysed.

If understood as such, the authorship of a code-generated poem can only be ascribed to an ambiguous enunciating subject. In this context, the act of enunciation is a result of a distributed mode of open source authorship, an expression of a collective assemblage of enunciation, as opposed to a singular act of authorship; a manifestation of an individual enunciation that grows out of singular concerns.[793] As such, it has to be conceptualised as an autopoietic mechanism, which, as McGann explains, 'cannot be separated from those who manipulate and use [it].'[794] Within

[790] ATP, 93.
[791] CTF.
[792] AK, 100.
[793] If read as such, code poetry can be seen as a minor literature, in line with Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the term. Minor literature relies on collective assemblages of enunciation, as opposed to major literature that is representational and a product of individual concerns [see: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003]. Hence, code poetics becomes, similarly to Goldsmith's conceptual project, a space of subversion, an avant-garde copyright loophole where standard categories of creativity do not apply.
[794] Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 15.

such a creative framework authorship emerges as a process rather than as a means of representation. A transformation of code into poetry, of a map into a plateau, only takes place when the code is executed, under circumstances that make the enunciation possible, an approach evocative of the conceptual logic, with its propensity to favour context over content as a source of meaning.

Deleuze and Guattari, echoing Foucault, consider a statement that is not enunciated, similarly to a code that is not executed, as one that has no purpose, nor meaning. A statement, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, does not exist 'outside of circumstances that do not only give it credibility but make it a veritable assemblage.'[795] Similar thinking is manifested in the programming notion of 'secondary notation,' a concept indicative of machine execution of code as its primary principle. 'Secondary notation', as used in programming, refers to visual cues used by code writers that are not part of the formal notation – the syntax of the coding language itself. Examples include the position of statements within a code file, the use of indentation, or colour to make particular fragments of code more easily legible to a programmer. Secondary notation does not return any results when the programme is run, it does not affect the act of computer reading and is solely intended to support the human activity of reading code. Secondary notation can be thought of as a digital equivalent of Goldsmith's nutritionless act of writing. The notion foregrounds the dynamic of engaging with code poetics in an interesting manner. Here, the focus is on computer rather than human reading of the Java file, on the moment of enunciation that becomes synonymous with running code and the process of generation of meaning – the *poeisis* of code (its making) – rather than the static text of the JavaScript itself. Hence, it is only when code is run, that writing takes place. In a state of authorship writing should be understood as a constant negotiation of the relationship between code and its interface, writing as 'a network of *productive* forces that facilitate the connection and creation of an encounter (a 'becoming other').[796]

However, if a statement-code only exists when it is enunciated then it can be said to always only exist 'eventally,' perfomatively, in the process of its actualisation. This commitment to process rather than representation inherent in code generated poetics is an integral feature of performance and the perfomative.[797] In fact, the

[795] ATP, 91.
[796] Constantine Verevis, 'Cinema', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: University of Edinburg Press, 2010), 49.
[797] Thinking about text as a manifestation of process rather than as a straightforward representation is evocative of Deleuze and Guattari's wider project. As O'Sullivan explains, 'Deleuze and Guattari's writing can itself be positioned as an experiment in thinking differently, 'beyond' representation. Their [...] projects [...] offer us a 'new image of thought', one in which process and becoming, invention and creativity, are privileged over stasis and recognition' [O'Sullivan, 2].

condition of enunciation that Deleuze and Guattari describe is reminiscent of J. L. Austin's model of a performative utterance. According to Austin, linguistic utterances make statements but also perform actions. As Austin suggests, to say something is to do something. 'To name the ship is to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words 'I name, &c.' Similarly, 'when I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., 'I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.'[798] The performativity of such statements is synonymous with the conflation of saying and doing; 'to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing [...] it is to do it.'[799] The performative utterance is not a description of an event or an action, it is the performing of the action or event through words. But, as Austin repeatedly stresses, an utterance can only be considered performative in a relevant context, if the necessary linguistic and social conditions are met, i.e. when a statement is enunciated, an approach explicitly echoed in Deleuze and Guattari's as well as Foucault's projects.

If coding is associated with process, with doing but also enunciating the action; if an instance of running code is a manifestation of simultaneous saying and doing what it says, then coding, and code generated poetry, should be seen as a performative project. In a system of generating text and meaning constructed as such, communication takes place as a speech act: as a result of 'the production or an issuance of the symbol or words or sentence in the performance of speech act.'[800] Building on Austin's notion, Searle's 'speech act' refers to the ways in which speaking or writing can be said to do something as well as to be something or say something, it is writing that performs an act. The dynamic of speech acts, I suggest, is echoed in the way programme code performs an action. An algorithm can be interpreted as a speech act. The command to run code transforms the static line of code into a performative statement, into a speech act, that is a manifestation of the implementation of the process, it declares and simultaneously generates, for example, a line inclusive of two short syllables selected from Montfort and Strickland's corpus. As such, writing code can be described as writing speech acts, or perhaps, more adequately statement-acts, to return to the original terminology developed in this chapter. It produces hybrid utterances – actualised in a state of authorship – that conflate the propensity for the statement rather than a sentence with Austin's and Searle's performative thinking.[801]

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[798] J.L Austin, *How to do things with words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), 6.
[799] Ibid.
[800] John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 16.
[801] Characteristically, Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'statement-act' in *A Thousand Plateaus* and point to 'immanent relations between statements and acts.'[801] This affinity

To understand the dynamic of writing code-generated poetry it is necessary to think about the creative process that governs the state of authorship, where writing is synonymous with the possibilities of organising statement-acts. A computer, or a browser, does not create the words that comprise the stanzas of *Sea and Spar*. Instead, it performs an act of selection of words from a data set. The act of selection constitutes the event of writing according to the iterative model of creative production, where curation and processes of moving information are key. Here, a new system of enunciation emerges, in which writing is associated with iterations of statement-acts, or, in Foucault's terms, a statement-events.[802] When a corpus of statements – the static code – is transformed into a statement-act or statement-event as enabled by the system of its enunciability – by its performance in a browser – it causes, in Foucault's words, 'a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events.'[803] Statements formulated on the level of code, performed as acts, generate new statements on the level of the interface. As an assemblage of statements, code becomes also an assemblage of performances; 'a general system of the formation and transformation of statements.'[804] It is a Foucauldian archive of a multiplicity of performances that simultaneously enables their performance, enacted each time a page is loaded, each time the JavaScript is enunciated. This new system of enunciation in the expanded, digital field implies that, as Hayles puts it,

> the poem ceases to exist as a self-contained object and instead becomes a process, an event brought into existence when the programme runs on the appropriate software loaded onto the right hardware. The poem is "eventalised," made more an event and less a discrete, self-contained object with clear boundaries in space and time.[805]

4.6. Performance score and the iteratibility of code

Hayles's description of what I have been discussing as acts of enunciation in terms of the 'eventalisation' of a poem foregrounds a crucial distinction between the temporalities of writing code and the event in which the writing is actualised; its enunciation as an event of writing. As Hayles notes, in electronic poetry, the time of a

between stating and acting yet again foregrounds the performative nature of a statement, not as a tool of communication but as a vehicle of moving information, from the static code, to its dynamic interface, a process evocative of similar principles of writing transcription as an act of organising information.

[802] AK, 129.

[803] Ibid, 130.

[804] Ibid.

[805] N. Katherine Hayles, 'The Time of Digital Poetry: From Object to Event', in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories,* eds. Adelaide Morris and Thomas Swiss (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 181-82.

poem can be considered to consist of the time of writing, the time of coding, the time of production/performance, and the time of reading [...] writing and coding become distinct and often temporary separated events.[806] Hence, a distinction has to be drawn between writing code and generating code on the screen, between writing and the event of writing, or perhaps between writing a script (in computer programming and performance sense of the word) – a score – and its performance. This is a crucial trajectory that shifts my discussion of code writing as a performative act to discussing code as performance. While a clear distinction has to be drawn between the notions of the performative and performance, the two are inherently interlinked. As Austin explains, the term performative derives from 'perform,' 'it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something.' [807] Performative acts are those which are actualised in performance. As Erika Fischer-Lichte explains, '[p]erformativity results in performances or manifests itself in the performative nature of acts.'[808] Performing, Richard Schechner suggests, is '"showing doing" [...] pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing.'[809] Running code can be seen as just that, it is a display of the underlying text and process that realises itself in and as performance.

When considered in line with this logic, code, I suggest, assumes a form of non-theatrical but scripted performance,[810] where running code always relies on a repetition of a script. Hence, the distinction between the time of writing and the event of writing, one that can also be approached as a manifestation of an interplay of script or score and a performance in which it is enacted, resonates with the characteristics of authorship model that emerges. Nathan Walker draws affinities between poetics of code, and JavaScript in particular, and a score for performance. Walker's discussion revolves around issues of performance of sound, sound poetry, and the sound of language, evocative, as Walker suggests, of the principles of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry. Although Walker's focus differs from Montfort and Strickland's, his reference to JavaScript as a performance score is both interesting and relevant here. Building

[806] Hayles, 'The Time', 182-83.
[807] Austin, 6-7.
[808] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London and New York: Routlege, 2008), 29.
[809] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28.
[810] While debates about digital media in performance have been proliferating in recent years, these tend to focus on new media in theatre, dance, performance art, installations, as well as born digital performance art. Recent publications include: Steve Dixon's *Digital Performance: A history of new media in theatre, dance, performance art, and installation* (2007) and Carolyn Guertin's *Digital Prohibitions* (2010), among others. The relationship between performance and digital textuality lacks similar coverage, although some work in this area has been carried out by ELMCIP (Electronic Literature as Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice project), and published by *Performance Research* journal.

on Walker's understanding of the dynamic of Java scripting, I want to suggest the structure of authorship of *Sea and Spar Between* can be successfully explained when its code is considered as a manifestation of John Cage's score for performance, or an Event score, and related Fluxus experiments. While broader preoccupations of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry are also valid in the context of *Sea and Spar,*[811] what I am particularly interested in here is the focus on the score as a set of instructions to a performer – characteristic of both Cage and Fluxus (and George Brecht in particular) – and the way in which it reverberates in Montfort and Strickland's approach to writing their JavaScript.

The underlying commitment to exploring the affinities between writing and process finds its manifestations in both code poetics and Fluxus scores. These are short, instruction-like texts proposing one or more actions that, as Liz Kotz explains, can be read as 'music scores, visual arts, poetic texts, performance instructions, or proposals for some kind of reaction or procedure [...] as tools for something else, as script for performance, project, or production.'[812] They developed from Cage's work in 1950s. But while Cage's performance scores focused on the possibilities of organising sound, Brecht's Event scores[813] translate the attitude and methods of musical notation to explore means of scripting what he called 'the structure of experience.'[814] It is Brecht's proposition of an Event, as a model of thinking about

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[811] See footnote 755 in this chapter.

[812] WTBLA, 61.

[813] The term 'event' appeared in Brecht's work already in its early stages. And while it is initially linked to Cage's notion of music as 'Event in sound-space' [George Brecht, *Notebook I*, June-September 1958, ed. Dieter Daniels and Herman Braun (Köln: Walter König, 1991), 4] and reflected in Brecht's early musical analyses, it is later expanded to a broader idea of an event in space-time. Even with the change of focus, Brecht's event refers to an occurrence, but its instance is not limited to sound. This shift is also reflected in the alteration in spelling: from 'event' to 'Event'. This is a trajectory explained by Brecht himself, in an interview with Dieter Daniels:

> Dieter Daniels: [...] the concept of 'events' takes a very interesting development in [your notebooks]. It is mentioned the first time in a quotation of John Cage 'Events in sounds-space' [...] and you use the word 'event' according to its sense in the dictionary, and then slowly almost unremarked the word 'event' gets more and more specific – until its finally the word 'Event' with a big E.
>
> George Brecht: Yes, like in *Towards Events*, the title of the show at the Reuben Gallery. [Brecht, *Notebook I*, unnumbered endnotes].

My spelling in this section reflects Brecht's. Where Brecht's later events are discussed, these are referred to as 'Events.'

'Towards Events: An Arrangement' that Brecht refers to in the interview was Brecht's first public exhibit. The show comprised objects accompanied by instructions to be performed. As Kotz points out, originally written as performance instructions, Brecht's scores were also displayed in gallery settings as standalone works. This is an attitude, I suggest, that in an interesting way anticipated the contemporary propensity to curate literary objects already discussed earlier in this thesis.

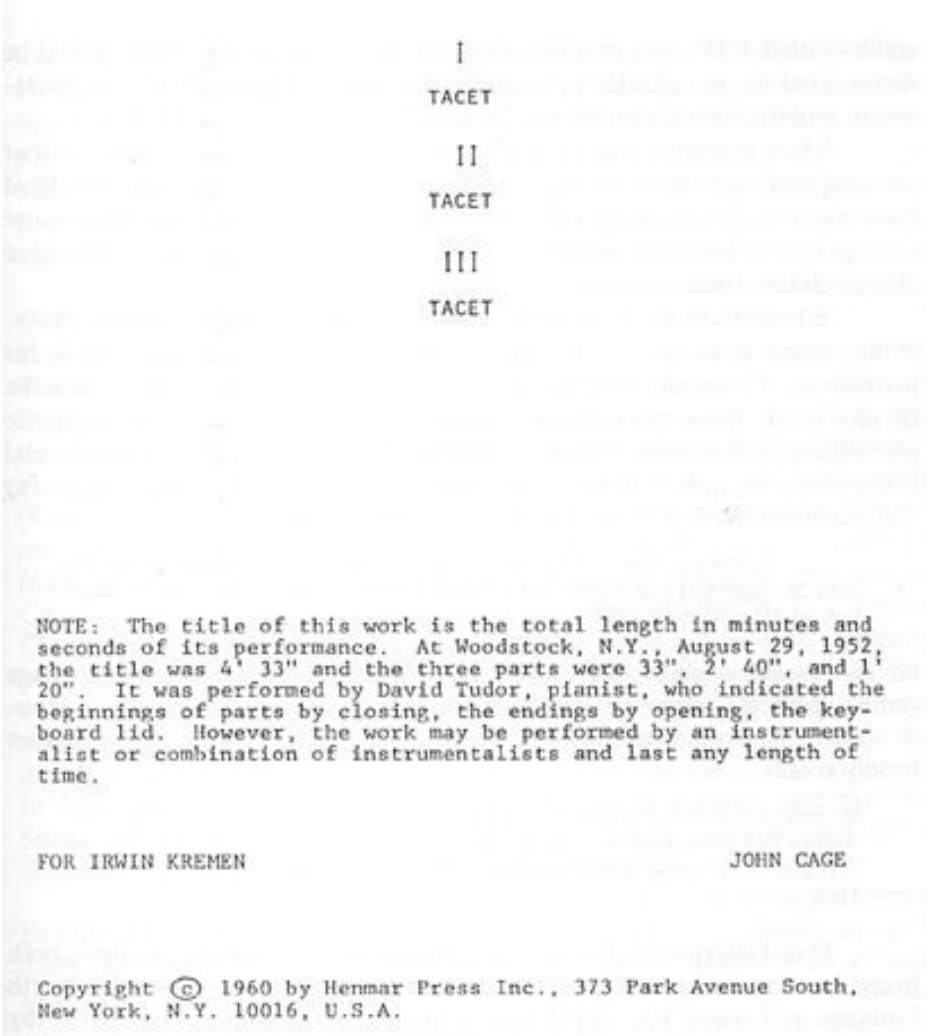
[814] George Brecht, *Notebook II*, October 1958-April 1959, ed. Dieter Daniels and Herman Braun (Köln: Walter König, 1991), 107.

scripting or authoring process, broadly conceived, rather than Cage's performance scores composed in the much more specific context of musical performance (even if his understanding of music is non-traditional) that I see as a particularly striking antecedent of the performative approach that underpins code-generated poetics.[815] However, Cage's thinking is foundational with respect to performance scores and his *4'33"* (1952) in particular remains relevant in the context. As Kotz puts it '*4'33"* inaugurates the models of the score as an independent graphic/textual object, inseparably *words to be read* and *actions to be performed*.'[816] Understood as such, the score assumes what Kotz describes as an operational function, 'in which the notation no longer describes what we hear but what we do.'[817] The same logic informs code generated poetics, and it is worth considering Cage's *4'33"* before focusing on the juxtaposition of Fluxus scores and contemporary code poetry, as a text that offers a model for both.

Composed as a piece of conceptual music and originally rendered in traditional notation, *4'33"* also exists as a text score, rendered entirely in words and numbers (the so called Tacet edition, which reads: 'I/Tacet/II/Tacet/III/Tacet' ('tacet' from Latin 'it is silent') [Figure 47]. As Kotz explains, this quality of *4'33"* makes it more readable and more accessible. Montfort and Strickland's 'cut to fit,' I suggest, engages in a similar project. The relationship between the JavaScript and its interface can be seen as that between the score and its performance, as conceived of by Cage, where, as Kotz puts it, 'the musical notation [and similarly code] ceases to be a system of representation and instead becomes a proposal for action.'[818] The same concerns, as discussed in relation to notions of enunciation and performativity, inform the dynamic of code. A performance of *4'33"*, and a performance of *Sea and Spar Between*, 'is a structured experience [...] that occurs in relation to a written inscription.'[819] By breaking down the lines of the script with extensive comments, the authors transform the unfamiliar language of code into a hybrid and experimental but legible and comprehensible text. This shift from musical notation to text, from code to natural language, serves as a destabilising tool used to foreground words that are

[815] Thinking about Montfort and Strickland's project through and in the context of Fluxus is particularly fitting, I suggest, not only because of certain affinities of form that can be drawn but because of an attitude towards creativity that they share. As Ken Friedman put it, 'Fluxus has been a [...] a forum of invention. Fluxus has been an intermedia activity, crossing the boundaries of art forms and moving over the boundaries of art entirely to do something interesting in the world.' [Ken Friedman, 'Editorial in Two Voices', *Performance Research*, 7.3 (2002), 1]. A similar commitment to unconventional thinking beyond the familiar media, discourses, and paradigms of writing is at the core *of Sea and Spar Between*.
[816] WTBLA, 62.
[817] Ibid, 17.
[818] Ibid.
[819] Ibid, 27.

conventionally marginal in both systems. In both Cage's score and in the JavaScript of *Sea and Spar* the natural language assumes a primary role, it is not of the order of secondary (musical, computational) notation, but rather functions as a primary material. Notation here is given a functional and aesthetic autonomy, as Kotz puts it, 'an autonomy that open[s] the door for the scores, instructions, or snippets of language to themselves *be* the work.'[820] In a similar manner the code of *Sea and Spar* is the work, and the method of its execution can be seen as an adaptation of Cagean notation function.



I

TACET

II

TACET

III

TACET

NOTE: The title of this work is the total length in minutes and seconds of its performance. At Woodstock, N.Y., August 29, 1952, the title was 4' 33" and the three parts were 33", 2' 40", and 1' 20". It was performed by David Tudor, pianist, who indicated the beginnings of parts by closing, the endings by opening, the keyboard lid. However, the work may be performed by an instrumentalist or combination of instrumentalists and last any length of time.

FOR IRWIN KREMEN JOHN CAGE

FIGURE 47: JOHN CAGE, TYPEWRITTEN SCORE OF *4'33"*

Writing poetry by algorithmic means eliminates from the compositional process many of the properties typically considered literary, or poetic, in the same way that Cage stripped his music of melody, harmony, rhythm, and, as *4'33"* shows, even notes, to reconceive music as 'the organisation of sound.'[821] If read in line with Cage's methodology, an act of writing code can be thought of as a means of organising

[820] Ibid, 48.
[821] Ibid, 13.

language, organising statements, and a process of authoring a poem by other means. The carefully designed but flexible and alterable scripting of process, in both Cage and Montfort and Strickland, accounts for writing a very specific type of performance, as Kotz puts it, 'by no means a formless "anything that happens," but the activation of a text.'[822] Kotz's description of Cage's performance in an interesting manner evokes the characteristic trajectories of code and its manifestations online. A text that is activated is a text that is eventalised in the moment of its enunciation, a text that is run in a browser to generate an interface in a moment of its machine performance. To use Lawrence Halprin's terminology, a Cagean score, just like code, is as 'a scoring mechanism' used to plan future events. 'Scores,' Halprin argues, 'are notations which use symbols to describe process over a period of time [...] Scores are devices for controlling events, for influencing what is to occur.'[823] Halprin's understanding of the event as that which can be pre-scripted foregrounds the structure of meaning production typical of code and at the same time evokes my discussion of the iterability of the event in the context of transcription writing in Chapter 3. The juxtaposition of the two inherently iterative practices foregrounds, I suggest, the distinct structures of authorship that inform transcription and code writing respectively. In both, texts emerge as a result of a singular, unrepeatable iteration of that which has already been written. A code-generated poem, or a Cagean performance, has always already begun before the code is run, before the score is enacted. Code is a re-enactment or a repetition of a script. As such, code as a performance score can be seen as a manifestation of both that which it will do when it is enunciated and that which it can do, as an exploration of the process and its inherent possibilities, similarly to a performance score, 'influencing what is to occur.' [824] As Cox suggests, this trajectory is inscribed into the etymology of the word 'programme.' From the Greek *programma*, a programme is a written notice to the public, 'it indicates a procedural way of doing things [...] "program" is a description of a future event and a set of instructions used to execute a specified task.'[825]

As an inscription of a programmed event, code, then, can be seen as a manifestation of the 'already-said' as described by Foucault. For Foucault, all discourse is based on the 'already-said;' 'not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said' [...] a writing that is

[822] Ibid, 27.
[823] Lawrence Halprin, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Process in the Human Environment* (New York: George Brazillier, 1969), 5.
[824] Ibid.
[825] Geoff Cox, *Speaking Code*: *Code as an Aesthetic and Political Expression* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT University Press, 2012), 41.

merely the hollow of its own mark,'[826] the never-said of discourse as a secondary notation of discourse. As Foucault explains, 'it is supposed therefore that everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that preceded it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences.'[827] The same structure of a multi-layered textuality that characterises code writing and the event that it generates is evoked here: code as a performance score understood as the 'semi-silence' that precedes its enunciation that 'continues to run obstinately beneath it' when the code is actualised.

As an enactment of a score, or a manifestation of the Foucaultian 'never said,' all meaning is always rehearsed, running a code, performing a Cagean score, always assumes a form of a repetition of the 'already-said.' But this is not to say that an event of writing or an event of performance can be unambiguously scripted and repeated. The logic of the event, as explained in Chapter 3, also applies here. An event is always singular, it is always unexpected and so it is that which cannot be programmed. The paradox that emerges as a result of the convergence of the notions of the 'already said' and the event can, however, be reconciled if discourse – as discussed by Foucault, and by analogy, code and performance scores – are considered as and when they occur, in the singular instances of their enunciation.[828] In other words, each act of iteration of the score, should be considered individual, unique, and irreducible, as 'an unrepeatable event,'[829] as a text that, in the process of its enunciation is eventalised, to return to Hayles. In such a context, the unrepeatability of the event resides in the nature of the event itself, where the event of running the code bears characteristics of a live performance, where each act, although repeating the pre-scripted scenario, remains inherently singular, where each repetition of the score is marked by its *différance*.

This is a characteristic feature of liveness, as discussed by Peggy Phelan. For Phelan, performance only exists in the present, 'performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented [...] performance's being [...] becomes itself through disappearance.'[830] The singularity of each instance of running code can be best understood, I suggest, as a manifestation of a live enactment of a performance score, in line with Phelan's assertion. For Phelan, performance is nonreproductive. Similarly, a performative speech act is characterised by the impossibility of its

[826] AK, 25.
[827] Ibid.
[828] Ibid.
[829] Ibid, 100.
[830] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 146.

repetition, 'each reproduction,' as Émile Benveniste explains, 'is a new act.'[831] This trajectory is echoed in code's structural reliance on a continual re-enactment of its JavaScript. A code-generated poem can only be enunciated by means of repetition, if and when the script is run in a browser. But, each time the code is run, the script is repeated, repeated but not reproduced. Each iteration of the code of *Sea and Spar Between* deposits the user/reader at random within the sea of stanzas, accounting for an individual, singular experience of the generated text as a manifestation of a certain sense of site specificity, or perhaps what could be more accurately described as an IP (Internet Protocol) site specificity, contingent on the here and now of the specific user, their browser, location, and technical specifications in the moment of running code, where each iteration produces a singular performance, a differential repetition rather than a repetition of the same.

If understood as such, any statement is both unrepeatable and endlessly repeatable. The enunciation of code is different every single time. The difference by which the repetition is marked is both concomitant to where, in the sea of stanzas, the user is deposited, to the material aspects of experiencing the code (i.e. screen resolution and size, speed of the Internet connection, the browser used), as well as to any subsequent developments of the code itself. Running code that has been altered, in which, for example, the data set has been replaced by a new corpus of appropriated literary texts, will require performing exactly the same process that will render distinct results. Unlike a traditional, printed book, in which such significant alterations would be marked by a publication of a new edition, a 'book' written in a state of authorship will morph fluidly and without overt acknowledgement of any changes that alter its content. Any alteration will only become evident under the condition of the encounter, when the reformulated statement is enunciated. The challenge of defining the creative and authorial paradigm of such texts stems from their complex, fluid but iterative texture. Where in the case of transcription writing any attempt at repetition alters the fixed and stable original source, in the case of code poetics the source itself is in a constant state of becoming, inherently and infinitely alterable, becoming poetry over and over again, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, 'reassembling the event, installing oneself in it as in a becoming'[832] each time code is run. The differential nature of repetition here resides both in the process of repetition, as described in Chapter 3, and in the complex nature of the source, in the dynamic structure of the statement. 'Instead of being something said once and for all – and lost in the past […],' Foucault explains,

[831] Émile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, quoted in Phelan, *Unmarked*, 149.
[832] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 111.

> the statement [and, similarly, a JavaScript] […] enters various networks and various field of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operation and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced […] Whereas an enunciation may be *begun again* or *re-evoked*, and a (linguistic or logical) form may be *reactualized*, the statement may be *repeated* – but always in strict conditions.[833]

Repeated, but not reproduced. This logic of code as performance interpreted as an inherently iterative act echoes Derrida's thinking. As Phelan puts it, for Derrida, the performative enacts the now of writing in the present time. But this enactment of writing is always inherently iterative; according to Derrida, without iterability, or citationality, 'there would not even be a "successful" performative.' [834] The performativity of code resides in its iterability. For the code to be run, the data set has to be repeated, all the algorithmic commands performed and executed anew every time the script, and like a script, a performance score, is actualised, each time circumstances of enunciation arise.

This understanding of authorship, writing, and performance in terms of an event as a singularity that can never be repeated without alteration reverberates in Brecht's ideas about the relationship between score and performance. The transformation of Cage's take on the event is where Brecht's project becomes so much more relevant to code poetics than the wider oeuvre of John Cage. As Anna Dezeuze explained, Brecht operated a twofold transformation of Cage's understanding of the event; 'on the one hand he focused on the single 'event' rather than the combination of 'events' in Cage's compositions, and on the other hand, he expanded Cage's definition to encompass any activity, whether it produces sound or not.'[835] The key feature of an event in Brecht's approach derives from his understanding of an event as that which occurs in time and so can only be isolated from the field of experience through notation, organised by means of an 'Event score' that takes a form of verbal instructions for performance. While for Brecht a score could take a form of a card with a few lines of text, in the digital environment it is transformed into lines of code in a '.js' file, both, in a very similar fashion offering instructions and direction, or as Brecht put it, 'a signal preparing one […] for an event to happen in one's own now.'[836] This approach towards scripting process is not dissimilar from the logic of programming. Brecht's *Three Telephone Events* (1961), for example, sets out three scenarios: 'When

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[833] AK, 104-05.
[834] SEC, 17.
[835] Anna Dezeuze, 'Brecht for Beginners', *Papers of Surrealism*, 4 (2005), 2.
[836] George Brecht, *Notebook VII*, March-June 1961, unpublished manuscript, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, Detroit, quoted in Julia Robinson, 'Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s', *Grey Room*, 33 (2008), 66.

the telephone rings, it is allowed to continue ringing', 'When the telephone rings the receiver is lifted and replaced', 'When the telephone rings, it is answered.'[837] The equivalent in JavaScript is the 'if' function of code syntax. It is this approach to language that is inseparable from action or process that I see as indicative of and anticipating developments in contemporary code poetry. Like Cage or Fluxus performance score, code is a written both as a text in its own right, and as a tool for something else, a script that generates a text on a computer screen, a script for a digital performance.

Gascia Ouzounian explains Brecht's performance of an Event score as an arrangement of an object or objects.[838] A realisation of a score entails performing by means of arranging or ordering objects but also interacting with this arrangement, 'in one's own now,' as it is eventalised and encountered. Brecht's *Three Chair Events* come to mind as an example evocative of this dynamic. Exhibited in 1961 as part of a group show *Environment, Situations, Spaces (Six Artists)* at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York, three chairs were shown in different places in the space of exhibition, broadly conceived. A white chair under a spotlight in the gallery, as Brecht explained, 'presented [...] very theatrically, like a work of art;' a black chair in the toilet ('I have the impression that no one noticed that it was part of the exhibition,' Brecht admitted); and a yellow one just outside the entrance of the gallery ('the most beautiful event happened to the yellow chair [...] when I arrived there was a woman wearing a large hat comfortably sitting in the chair and talking to a friend')[839] [Figure 48]. In the score for *Three Chair Events* [Figure 49], Brecht identifies an act of sitting on a chair as an 'occurrence.' But an event set out as such, framed by ambiguous exhibition and para-exhibition spaces, only occurs as it is noticed by the visitor, as a staged encounter, an incident that is pre-scripted. It is the relationship between the score and its realisation point that come to the fore in this exhibit. Here, the event only takes place at the moment of an encounter with its manifestation, as a form of 'an incident.' This understanding of the relationship between the score, the event, and their manifestation is echoed, I suggest, in the dynamic of code. Code as a performed statement-event only occurs as it is enunciated and encountered, its performativity is expressed not only in the instance of running the code, but also in noticing the

[837] George Brecht, *Three Telephone Events*, in *The Fluxus Performance Workbook*, eds. Ken Friedman, Owen Smith, and Lauren Sawchyn (Performance Research e-publications, 2002), 23.
[838] Gascia Ouzounian, 'The Uncertainty of Experience: On George Brecht's Event Scores', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 10.2 (2011), 208.
[839] George Brecht, interview by Irmeline Lebeer, in *An Introduction to George Brecht's "Book of the Tumbler on Fire"*, ed. Henry Martin (Milan: Edizioni Multipla, 1978), 87.

instance of its performance, in the same way finding Brecht's chair should be considered an event.

FIGURE 48: GEORGE BRECHT'S YELLOW CHAIR, *THREE CHAIR EVENTS* AT MARTHA JACKSON GALLERY, NEW YORK, 1961

FIGURE 49: GEORGE BRECHT, *THREE CHAIR EVENTS*, PERFORMANCE SCORE

As such, an Event score, and similarly code, not only structures occurrences but also experiences of those events. As Brecht puts it, 'music isn't just what you hear or what you listen to, but everything that happens [...] Events are an extension of

music.'[840] Running code as the event of writing is an extension of writing. Code, then, should be thought of as a post-Cagean, post-Fluxus score, as a score in an expanded field that is open to appropriating and interpreting anything as performance. The questions that *Sea and Spar* triggers are evocative of Fluxus concerns and the Fluxus attitude more broadly. *Sea and Spar* and Fluxus scores and performances alike fall outside of any single media, art, or literary category, as a result raising questions that have to do with the role of art/literature and the artist/writer, with how art is made, presented, and received, but also, as Elizabeth Armstrong explains, 'they [...] have to do with the boundaries of art – how these are determined and by whom.'[841] There is a sense in the works of Fluxus of an emerging models for distributed authorship that challenge the familiar notions of creativity at the Iterative turn.

Both the Event score and JavaScript as a score for performance are defined by what Kotz describes as a 'structural reliance on continual reenactment,'[842]where the emergence of an event implies both its repetition and an iteration of a score. The singular nature of each generated event, be it a Fluxus performance or a coded event of writing, permits rather than prevent its iterability. This is the dynamic of repetition characteristic of live event and performance. Writing and subsequently running code can be said to rehearse the performative act, where the invisible text of the code, the Foucaultian 'never-said' of the 'behind-the-scenes' layers of textuality is brought to the fore. As Alice Rayner puts it,

> the code is necessary but unavailable except as a symptom; alien to life in three dimensions, but present; the media of community that has no place and exists only each time it is iterated; [...] The iterations of code are performances without theatre.[843]

Hayles explores this dynamic by discussing differences in reading experiences of analogue and digital texts. As she explains, reading a book involves engaging with a text that exists in the fixed form prior to the moment when reading commences. Reading a book engenders an experience very unlike that of reading a text in the digital environment. As Hayles explains, an electronic text does not exists anywhere in the form in which it is realised on the screen and encountered by the reader. 'In this sense,' Hayles argues, 'electronic text is more processual than print; it is

[840] Ibid, 84.
[841] Elizabeth Armstrong, 'Fluxus and the Museum', in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 1993), 14.
[842] WTBLA, 65.
[843] Alice Rayner, 'Everywhere and Nowhere: Theatre in Cyberspace', in *Of Borders and Thresholds: Theatre, History, Practice, and Theory*, ed. Michael Kobialka (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 299.

performative by its very nature.'[844] The text that is encountered as it is enunciated in the performance is not the text that is authored, the script is not simply repeated – as would be the case in the more tradition theatre performance for example, that relies on a repetition of lines of a play – but it generates a particular act, a particular text that follows the instruction of the score, it repeats is but does not reproduce it. The process that takes place in the digital environment, and, similarly, in a Brechtian enactment of an Event score, still relies on a repetition of the original, or perhaps originary text, but this repetition derives from its transformation rather than a repetition.

Zen for Head (1962) can be cited as an example representative of the attitude so pervasive in the generic and creative categories of Fluxus work. Performed by Nam June Paik in 1962 during the first Fluxus festival, *Zen for Head* was Paik's interpretation of a composition by La Monte Young. Young's 1960 score directed the performer to 'draw a straight line and follow it.'[845] In the 1962 performance, Paik dipped his head, hand, and necktie into a bowl of ink and tomato juice and dragged them along a length of a sheet of paper, stretched on the floor [Figure 50]. As Elizabeth Armstrong puts it,

> this piece [...] began as a composition, took the form of a performance, and ultimately was preserved as an object in the Museum Wiesbaden [...] Paik's performance created an object that might be called a painting. But none of these terms satisfactorily describes *Zen for Head*, which falls outside any single media category or art historical moment.[846]

The same terminological challenges and issues with generic qualifications that come to the fore in Fluxus performance characterise the debates surrounding contemporary developments in code poetry. The ambiguous status of *Zen for Head* is a result of the 'collaborative' authorship that shaped it. But the structure of authorship, I suggest, should be associated here not with the attribution but rather with its distribution, with Fluxus creative paradigms anticipating the open source thinking that characterises code writing practices today. The same quality of 'openness' that translates into subversive models of writing and alternative means of conceptualising creativity pervades both Montfort and Strickland's and Fluxus projects, also interestingly evoked in terminological parallels. The tendency to appropriate and recycle dictated by open source principles in code writing communities in Fluxus

[844] N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 101.
[845] La Monte Young, 'Composition 1960 no. 10', in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, eds. La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low (New York: MELA Foundation, 1963), non pag.
[846] Armstrong, 'Fluxus,' 14.

takes the form of what Brecht referred to as an open system. An open system, unlike a closed one (i.e. a traditional narrative recorded in a form of a printed book), does not end, is always in flux, always in a state of becoming. It does not generate a finished work but rather offers a means of activating a process, yet again foregrounding the fluidity and ambiguity of making and not the thing made.

FIGURE 50: NAM JUNE PAIK, *ZEN FOR HEAD* (1962) AT FLUXUS FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK IN WIESBADEN

An interesting convergence of open source paradigms and system aesthetics transpires in Brecht's notion of the open system. In fact, Brecht seems to have been aware of systems theories as early as 1959,[847] and, as Dezeuze observed, his notes suggest he was, just like Burnham, interested in cybernetic models. Brecht's thinking

[847] Brecht makes a reference to the 'open system' in his *Notebook* compiled between April and August 1959 [George Brecht, *Notebook III*, April 1959 – August 1959, ed. Dieter Daniels and Herman Braun (Köln: Walter König, 1991), 118]. There is also a mention of 'systems' in *Notebook II* (page 65), and a reference to readings in the field of cybernetics in *Notebook V* [George Brecht, *Notebook V*, March-Nov 1960, ed. Herman Braun (Köln: Walter König, 1991), 157].

in relation to systems theories focused on a preoccupation with what he describes as 'points' at which 'randomness intersects order, knowledge, control, open systems,' each a 'reference frame' that can be arranged.[848] As Dezeuze suggest, the Event scores might have emerged as such points, in which all five reference frames intersect. And the JavaScript of *Sea and Spar* can be read as a manifestation of a similar attitude. It is an attempt at arranging and organising an open system in which randomness of navigating the extensive corpus of text converges with order and control of the pre-scripted operation. Here, conflated knowledge of poetics and programming form a unified reference frame, defining and simultaneously questioning the possibility of apprehending the creative reality that generates it. Seen as such, *Sea and Spar* emerges as an example of what Brecht describes as 'borderline' art that problematises the modes of apprehension of 'reference frames.' It is formulated in the open (source) system as art 'dissolving into other dimensions,'[849] where paradigms of authorship inevitably challenge the familiar structures that operate within a closed system. This is an inherently speculative approach which also foregrounds a similar sense of openness associated with innovation at a cultural turn.[850] As manifestations of and triggers for such speculative, generative, borderline art, both open source and open system not only allow for but assume a propensity for iteration, modification, and distribution rather than attribution as paradigmatic features of a creative process and as a means of exploring the limits of authorship in what emerges as a new field of (aesthetic) possibilities. [851] Here, attitudes characteristic of an open, networked environment are evoked in a corresponding experimental form.

This approach to writing formulated as a convergence of aesthetic and cybernetic thinking can, in fact, be seen as a manifestation of a more widespread attitude in the creative scene at the time. Both Dezeuze and Kotz link Brecht's thinking to Umberto Eco's poetics of the open work that emerged as an attempt at theorising radical poetics. *The Open Work* (1978) is relevant here as a text and an approach to creativity that resonates with a commitment to a kind of 'openness' that manifests itself clearly in Fluxus and, today, code poetry. As Dezeuze explained, what Eco theorised was a relationship between a static or closed order and one that escapes the control of the order, the latter associated with chance, indeterminacy, events, and

[848] Brecht, *Notebook V*, 157.
[849] Ibid, 74.
[850] As described by Drucker, 'speculative approaches seek[s] to create parameter-shifting, open-ended, inventive capabilities' [SC 8].
[851] I paraphrase here George Brecht's 'Statement', in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963*, ed. Joan Marter (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 158-159.

mobility.[852] The notion of open work is a manifestation of attempts to create works that subvert the familiar categories of creativity and in their ambiguity allow for a plurality of interpretations. The Brechtian Event score and, similarly, a JavaScript file, are characterised by the same openness Eco described, as dynamic forms always negotiating 'the dialectic movement between form and openness,' which, as Eco explained, 'determines the limits within which a work can accentuate its ambiguity [...] while keeping its existence at work.'[853] The discourses of open work, systems aesthetics, or open systems that provide a context for the late 1950s/1960s experimental work in the arts point to affinities between ideas about art and writing as a system but one that is primarily interested in the exploration of its own possibilities, in an autopoietic logic of invention. As Brecht, Kaprow, and Watts describe it, the 'new advance guard' in the United States was characterised by 'a general loosening of forms which in the past were relatively closed, strict, and objective, to ones which are more personal, free, random, and open.'[854]

This pervasive sense of openness, however, should be seen as more than an attempt at experimentation with form, to be reconfigured as a manifestation of a certain neo-avant-garde attitude that surfaces anew in the neo-neo-avant-garde of code poetics.[855] What transpires, then, is a model of an avant-garde for the twenty-first century that, as discussed in the context of transcription poetics, relies on iterations of attitudes that become form, and where the understanding of the emergent contemporary poetic paradigms is synonymous with a reiteration of both the earlier avant-garde attitude and form at the same time. The difference between

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[852] Anna Dezeuze, "Open work,' 'do-it-yourself- artwork and *bricolage*', in *The 'do-it-yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media*, ed. Anna Dezeuze (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 50.

[853] Umberto Eco, 'Introduzione alla II edizione', quoted in Dezeuze, 'Open work', 50.

[854] George Brecht, Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts, 'Project in multiple dimensions' in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-garde*, 1957-1963, ed. Joan Marter (Newark: Newark Museum, 1999), 155.

[855] Debating code poetics as an iteration of Fluxus attitude as well as form is a particularly valid manifestation of Fluxus thinking. Fluxus, in fact, has been described as an attitude rather than a unified movement or group. As Owen F. Smith explained, 'Fluxus is historically complex and philosophically difficult to define. This very ambiguity is, however, an aspect of its radicality. Fluxus is both an attitude toward art-making and culture that is not historically limited, or a specific historical group. [...] This attitude is in part traceable to the network of interrelated ideas about culture, politics, and society explored earlier in the twentieth century by Futurists, the Dadists, and the Surrealists. Some of these same ideas were later explored [...] by artists associated with groups such as Lettrism, International Situationism, Nouveau Realism, and Fluxus itself [...] The Fluxus attitude was [...] part of the larger, more general development in the twentieth-century avant-garde that sought not just to change art but to change the way people perceived the world and cultural differentiations' [Owen J. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 2011), 1, 3]. And, I suggest, the Fluxus attitude can be seen as manifesting itself anew in the context of digital poetics today, and in Montfort and Strickland's approach exemplified in *Sea and Spar Between*, with its attempt to reformulate means of writing poetry and criticism in the expanded, digital field.

the approach to the re-appropriation of the avant-garde gesture in transcription and code poetics can be seen as a distinction between the Duchampian readymade or Warhol's paintings and the Fluxus performance. While in transcription poetics the iterated text assumes the static form of a readymade, code's iteration of the appropriated material is realised in its performance that escapes similar fixity. Both, however, are evocative of a pervasive efforts to reconfigure familiar paradigms of creativity and authorship in response to their particular cultural moments. This openness that characterises Fluxus thinking and today echoes in the open source standards of writing not just code but also poetry should, then, be seen as an openness of and towards paradigms of creativity and authorship that takes on an increasingly collaborative, distributed form.

As Julia E. Robinson explained, for Fluxus the score's value resided in its very inscription of collectivism;

> the score was an ideal device for defetishzing artistic practice because it reanimated (and even scripted) the relationship between the work and the audience. Rejecting work of "art" as finalized, static objects, the primary function of the Fluxus score was to compose relationships between subjects.[856]

The same collective thinking about authorship that rejects singular agency and the fetish of the author as a Romantic genius is characteristic for code-generated poetics. With code written to be repurposed, reused, and adapted by other poets and programmers, the attitude reverberates clearly with Fluxus approach to writing scores and their performances. As Ken Friedman explained, 'the fact that many Fluxus works are designed as scores, as works which can be rehearsed by artists other than the creator' is not only a characteristic of Fluxus, but, for Friedman, '*the* key concept in Fluxus.'[857] Similarly, it is the open access thinking that, I suggest, should be considered the defining feature of the creative practice behind code generated poetics. The structure of its authorship, evocative of the modalities of Fluxus performances, can only be explained as a process of creation of an Event score. As Robinson put it,

> by defining the work of art through the condition of complete contingency – refusing the foreclosure of singular authorship or singular, ideal performace let alone an object – the event score exists as a new matrix through which to read artistic investment, and one which demands to be read with reoriented or revisited theoretical approaches.[858]

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[856] Robinson, 'Maciunas', 67.
[857] Ken Friedman, 'Fluxus and Company', in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. Ken Friedman (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 250-51.
[858] Julia E. Robinson, 'The Brechtian Event Score: A Structure in Fluxus', *Performance Research* 7 (3), 2002: 113.

Armstrong points to an interest in and commitment to exploring the status of artistic media and their ambiguous, changing nature that comes to the fore in the Fluxus project and can be seen, I suggest, as an antecedent of *Sea and Spar*. Fluxus, as Friedman pointed out, 'evolved around a conscious use of model making and paradigm formation,'[859] an approach evoked in Montfort and Strickland attempt at arriving at a new form of writing criticism. Higgins's notion of intermedia illustrates the attitude explicitly. Developed in his 1966 'Statement on Intermedia', the concept offers an alternative means of interrogating traditional art forms at the particular cultural moment, characterised by the breakdown of familiar categories of art and a dissolution of conventional forms. The difference between the acts of Cage, Fluxus and Montfort and Strickland is that of their respective technological means but the logic behind them remains strikingly similar.

4.7. ELECTRACY: TOWARDS A BOOK TO COME

The debates about performativity, communication, and language are well-rehearsed, but they acquire new significance in the context of the expanded literary field of code poetics at the Iterative turn. Characteristically, performativity is seen as that which produces change; it brings into effect consequences of actions. As Derrida explains, the performative 'produces or transforms a situation, it effects.' [860] Conceptualising code as performative can be thought of as transformative in the sense that Derrida points to, it transforms the situation of poetics to accommodate alternative models of authorship and creativity that emerge in the new, digital environment. The difficulty of defining the paradigm of authorship for an electronic text resides in its inherently rhizomatic structure. It is the convergence of the considerations about technology and poetics, functionality, process, its execution, and aesthetic outcomes – of the disparate reference frames, to return to Brecht's terminology – that forms the framework for reframing writing in the expanded digital field. These complexities cannot be accommodated by the familiar literary categories and, hence, require a transformed situation. In code poetry, functions of reading, execution and use, as well as performance are heavily interdependent. And, while in an analogue environment, performing a text is not the same as reading it, those distinctions become blurred as a result of the transformation of literary production online, where the possibility of reading a text is increasingly contingent on its

[859] Friedman, 'Fluxus', 237.
[860] SEC, 13.

performance. What this framework offers is a way of moving discussions of digital poetics away from the literary debates toward the field of performance theory. Such an approach advances, I suggest, a model of conceptualising code writing by means of an authorial framework that allows for alternative take on the creative practice.

As Mark Amerika explained, today 'writing is becoming ever more performative in a network-distributed environment.'[861] The context encourages an emergence of distributed forms of authorship, its performativity shifts the dynamic of creative practice, prompted by 'the logic of invention'[862] as defined in Ulmer's heuretic project. Reading and writing in this context should be seen as an emergent creative paradigm that can be explored as an exercise in electracy rather than literacy. For Ulmer, electracy is a manifestation of the logic of invention in the current digital moment, a transition from one established aesthetic paradigm to another. The move towards electracy and away from more familiar models of literacy is, according to Ulmer, a repetition of the similar transition from orality to literacy; one triggered by the proliferation of digital technologies, the latter by the invention of alphabetic writing. 'Electracy [...] is being invented not to replace [...] orality and literacy [...] but to supplement them with a third dimension of thought, practice, and identity.'[863] The methodology behind this invention is driven by the logic of iteration and hence of particular relevance to the broader project put forward in this thesis. If electracy is a principle of innovation, then innovation should be defined as a repetition of an attitude adopted in a new technological context, one that inevitably includes a new experience of thought and, as a result, of new creative paradigms for a new cultural turn. It engages, as Groys puts, 'the revaluation of values [as] the general form of innovation'[864] to anticipate the possibilities of writing under changing conditions of writing.

Electracy grows out of Ulmer's heuretic project and as such encourages a certain processuralisation of engaging with texts. It relies on turning aesthetic attention not to the text itself, not to data alone, but to the dynamic behind it. It leads, as a result, to reading and writing that combines both process and data by conflating the aesthetic sensibilities and objects with those of *technē*, or utility. 'The argument is,' Ulmer stresses, echoing Drucker, 'that the disciplines of Arts and Letters have as much to contribute to the essential formation of electracy as do science, engineering,

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[861] Mark Amerika, 'Expanding the Concept of Writing: Notes on Net Art, Digital Narrative and Viral Ethics', *Leonardo*, 37.1 (2004), 9.
[862] Ulmer, *Heuretics*, 20.
[863] Gregory L. Ulmer, 'The Learning Screen', *Networked: a (networked_book) about (networked_art)*, accessed 22 April 2014, http://ulmer.networkedbook.org/the-learning-screen-introduction-electracy/.
[864] Groys, *On the New*, 10.

computing, and related technical fields.'[865] But this reconeptualisation of thinking about means of knowledge, information, or literary production moves beyond disciplinary boundaries not in an interdisciplinary fashion but by means of creating new systems of thought and models of writing. Electracy emerges out of a recognition that, when it comes to digital writing – a system of textual production that creates events rather than objects – we need to think about, read, and interpret not just the text that is generated on the screen, but also actively engage with what happens to the text and how the process is formulated. The reading and writing of the digital text requires, as Simanowski put it, 'a shift from a hermeneutics of linguistic signs to a hermeneutics of intermedial, interactive, and processing signs,'[866] or perhaps to Ulmer's heuretics, foregrounding the process over the text produced. *Sea and Spar*, and code poetics more broadly, relies on hereutic gestures in order to arrive at relevant means of conceptualising the methods of this emergent model of creativity that requires a convergence of technological and poetic thinking by new, speculative means.

Just as Kittler declared in 1995, today 'we still don't know what our writing does.'[867] Seen as a speculative exercise in electracy, Montfort and Strickland's project can be read as an attempt at understanding the possibilities of the written text today. It is an exploration in the process, the methods behind it, and the possibilities of engaging with the emergent models of iterative writing in the context of the technological environment that triggers the turn towards iteration itself. Understanding writing code poetics as a manifestation of electracy allows for an alternative, speculative approach to authorship and creativity. Authorship conceptualised as such facilitates writing generated by an open (access) system of enunciation in a constant state of becoming: becoming other text by means of manipulation of the source, but, also, in an act of its enunciation: becoming poetry, over and over again, in an infinitely iterative act, every time the code is run. As a repetition of an earlier avant-garde project, and a repetition of Dickinson's and Melville's text, *Sea and Spar* emerges as an example of a particularly characteristic contemporary attitude towards writing the avant-garde at the Iterative turn. Similarly to Erasure and Transcription, this mode of contemporary experimental poetics assumes iteration as an aesthetic dominant, as both a form and an attitude.

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[865] Ulmer, *Networked*.
[866] Roberto Simanowski, 'What is and toward what end do we read digital literature?', in *Literary Art in Digital Performance: Case Studies in New Media Art and Criticism*, ed. Francisco J. Ricardo, (New York: Continuum, 2009), 14.
[867] Friedrich Kitler, 'There is no Software', in *CTheory*, 18 October 1995, accessed 2 July 2014, http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=74.

This thesis, by focusing on the iterative forms that respond to the new cultural situation, presents a condition of emergence. As Vilém Flusser puts it, 'a changing consciousness calls for a change in technology, and a changing technology changes consciousness.' [868] Erasure, transcription, and code-generated poetries are all determined by and in turn determine such processes of change. The notion of iteration is a way of describing the kind of thinking that incites the most recent set of technological and aesthetic transformations and, at the same time, a critical framework for interrogating their outcomes. It is a process, caught up in the midst of change, in a process of becoming an aesthetics, in a state of transformation from literacy to electracy, and, hence, implicitly imperfectly formed. As such, iteration is indicative of an ongoing task of writing the contemporary turn.

The category of 'the contemporary' itself has been extensively debated in the last decade. The contemporary in the arts replaces both the 'modern' and the 'postmodern' as the aesthetic manifestation of the now. The contemporary, as this thesis has attempted to show, is iterative. Although such unequivocal historicism does not do justice to the complexities of the processes of cultural transformation, it reflects a characteristic thinking that informs the aesthetic tendencies of today. As Katy Siegel explains, a 'sensitivity to the present' is a feature of the contemporary. At the same time 'our estimation of the present is accompanied by a heightened and more imaginative awareness of the past.'[869] This attitude is clearly manifested in the proliferating tendency to repeat texts, concepts, and attitudes of historical avant-gardes discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 as an expression of the contemporary aesthetics, often adapting texts or practices of artists and writers previously overlooked as they did not fit the narrative of modern or postmodern art, e.g. Johnson and Phillips with their erasures. As Perloff observes, 'with the climate of the [twenty-first] century [...] we seem to be witnessing a poetic turn from the resistance model of the 1980s to dialogue – a dialogue with earlier texts or texts in other media.'[870] Today, '*Inventio* is giving way to appropriation [...] the new sentence [...] has been replaced by citational or documentary prose, drawn from a variety of source texts.'[871]

Seen as such, iteration becomes a way of conceptualising contemporary innovation in creative practice. It presents a possibility, an exploratory condition of culture that anticipates the next staging, in a new *technē*, of writing after the end of

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[868] Viém Flusser, *Does Writing Have a Future*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 17.
[869] Katy Siegel, 'The Year in Review – USA', *Frieze*, 151 (2012), accessed 25 August 2014, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/the-year-in-review-usa/.
[870] UG, 11.
[871] Ibid, 11, 21.

writing.[872] It anticipates the possibilities of the book to come. But the book that materialises at the Iterative turn interrogates the paradigms of the book, instead of reaffirming them. It is a Derridean book,[873] gradually divorced from the familiar book both in terms of form and content. Its transformation is not informed, however, by the all too familiar debates about the death of the book; rather, it stems from an altered condition of creativity. This contemporary book, reconceptualised as the book to come, assumes, as Derrida explains, a form of a text, 'not corpus or opus [...] but [an] open textual process [...] offered on boundless [...] networks, for the active or inactive intervention of readers turned coauthors.'[874] It is a book that shows 'an extreme capacity for rapture,'[875] it engenders change and invites novel thinking about familiar categories. It is a perverse book that forms a perverse library[876] to come, but a book nevertheless.

Hence, iteration as a creative paradigm is a means of looking to the future of creative practice, to engage with writing as *à venir* of writing. This is writing that is both open to the possibilities to come and a manifestation of an open system of writing in the expanded field. This sense of looking to the future is implicit in the idea of the Iterative turn, born out of a need to devise categories for thinking the contemporary and the future of writing that it anticipates, to understand the creative condition that goes beyond 'the closure of the book.'[877] It is, to borrow from Groys, an exercise in 'the revaluation of values as the principle informing cultural innovation.'[878] The strategy of innovation at the Iterative turn pertains to a shift 'in the boundary separating the valorised, archived cultural tradition,'[879] a transformation in the

[872] I am paraphrasing the title of Arthur C. Danto's *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).
[873] Thinking about writing today as a Derridean book to come reaffirms the iterative project devised in this thesis. Derrida's 'The Book to Come' is an iterative text. It draws on and appropriates Blanchot's *The Book to Come* (1959). Blanchot's is, as Derrida explains, 'a book that deals with the book' [Jacques Derrida, 'The Book to Come', *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 8], it is a book about other books and about the future of writing in general. As such, Derrida's text turns into a book that deals with the book that deals with the book, it is 'a quotation of a quotation' [Ibid, 8] written to reread and deconstruct the source it repeats, in the process creating a completely new text. It proposes 'the new space of writing [...] linking together beyond frontiers of copyright [...] any reader as a writer' [Ibid, 15].
[874] Derrida, 'The Book', 7-8.
[875] Ibid, 14.
[876] This reference draws on both Derrida's discussion of a library as a space to come, transformed to accommodate the future book and on the title of Dworkin's *Perverse Library* (2010), a volume comprising a bibliography of Dworkin's library, real and imagined.
[877] Derrida, 'The Book', 15.
[878] Groys, *On the New*, 86.
[879] Ibid, 85.

boundary between the copy and the original to 'dissociate the word *original* from its partner *genius*.'[880]

In his 1993 manifesto, Mark Amerika declared the birth of the artist as a parasite, sampling from everything and bringing in the future as a realm where 'creating a work of art will depend more and more on the ability of the artist to select, organise, and present the bits of raw data.'[881] We are now living in the future, the future of uncreative production and unoriginal writing, the future emerging at the Iterative turn. 'We are early in this game,' Goldsmith writes,

> still, it is impossible to predict where it's all headed. But one thing is for certain; *it's not going away*. [...] The art of managing information and re-presenting it as writing [...] is [...] a bridge, connecting the human-driven innovations of the twentieth century literature with technology-soaked robopoetics of the twenty-first century.'[882]

While the notion of iteration does not resolve the creative and critical struggles of the contemporary moment, it is as an opening. It is as this transitional site of possibility that iteration gains prominence today, to emerge as a creative paradigm for the current aesthetic turn.

[880] UG, 21.
[881] Mark America, 'Avant-Pop Manifesto: Thread Baring Itself in Ten Quick Posts', in *META/DATA: A Digital Poetics* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 293.
[882] UW, 227.

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